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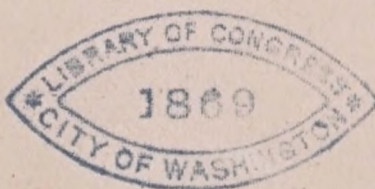




MARRIED AGAINST REASON.

BY

ADELHEID SHELTON-MACKENZIE.



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Dedication.

TO MAY, CONSTANZIA, ADELHEID, AND MARION.

MY DEAR DAUGHTERS:—

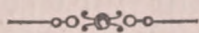
In the following pages I have endeavored to sketch the middle-class life of Germany,—incidents which occurred and persons whom I knew. I shall be rewarded, if I convey to your young minds accurate ideas of the father-land of

Your affectionate Mother,

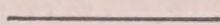
ADELHEID SHELTON-MACKENZIE.

PHILADELPHIA, 1869.

MARRIED AGAINST REASON.



PART I.



CHAPTER I.

WILLMA PERCLASS.

WILLMA was undeniably the most beautiful girl of Moosdorf. Not, however, to her regular and finely chiselled features alone, nor to her exquisitely shaped small figure, did she owe her great loveliness, but also, and in a great measure, to the uncommon intellect expressed in her face. Her low but broad forehead promised great power of thought; the proud, full brown eyes shone fearlessly from under the delicately drawn brows, and the firmly set mouth, not too large to lack beauty, nor too small to betray want of sense, denoted unusual determination. She was the youngest of three sisters. The two elder were married in other cities. When Willma was only fourteen years of age her mother died, but she fearlessly undertook the management of her father's establishment, and succeeded in becoming the wonder of all who knew her. Those who had pronounced Dr. Perclass very unwise, in allowing this young child of his to undertake so difficult a task, were silenced by the praiseworthy and sagacious manner in which she discharged her duties as mistress of his house.

She was a devoted daughter and a kind mistress, but her will was law even with her father, who often used to say, while shrugging his shoulders, and with a smile on his kind, jovial countenance, "It cannot be done! My daughter would never

consent." Many called her proud, self-willed, and heartless ; she may have possessed the first two qualities, but I know she was charged wrongfully with the latter. Placed as she was, obliged to perform duties which fall usually to much older persons, she was less gay and more thoughtful than girls of her age generally are.

She was rather indifferent and reserved with gentlemen, receiving their attention simply as the homage which could not fail to be rendered to her, as a right and a tribute paid to her charms ; for it is not to be supposed that Willma should have been ignorant of her own attractions. Here her good sense revealed itself strongly, for where others would have become vain, or coquettish, she showed, neither by word, deed, or look, that she was conscious of them, and often we wondered whether she really was ignorant of her power. As her father was wealthy she was able to cultivate her talents, and did not neglect to make herself perfect in the accomplishments with which one becomes an ornament to society. Although very much liked by all her friends, and with heart and soul joining in their girlish thoughts and plans, she had only one intimate friend, a confidant devotedly attached to her. This was Bertha Bauer, also a girl of great intellect, who was the life of society by her wit and conversational power, good-natured in the whole, and therefore generally liked.

CHAPTER II.

THE TWO FRIENDS.

"GOOD-MORNING Bertha. Is it very cold?"

With these words Willma greeted her friend, who just now had entered the room, glowing from cold and the piercing wind which was blowing through the streets.

"It is, indeed, and if I had been aware of it, before I left

home, I should certainly have wrapped myself up much warmer. Just look here, — only this thin shawl, this small bonnet, which is of no earthly use, and not even a veil to protect my face from the cutting wind."

"Poor thing!" said Willma, in mock compassion; "however, here is a bright fire in the stove; do you hear it crackle? and here are cosy chairs to comfort you. Let us sit down and chat a little. You have brought your work, have you not?"

"Yes, although I cannot stay long. I have no time to lose, and must not be idle even for an hour. I have so many presents to make this year that I am obliged to begin on them already. Ah, this is comfortable, now," — nestling between the soft cushions. "Willma, sit opposite me, for I have some interesting news for you and have come out thus early to talk it over."

"I am all attention, — proceed! No, not yet," she added; "wait a few minutes longer. I have a most beautiful piece of music, which I have been practising all the morning; I want you to hear that first of all."

"Is it very long, Willma?"

"Not long, but very beautiful. I am sure you will think so too." Without waiting for an answer, or noticing the impatient expression that crossed Bertha's face, she began to play. Beautiful sounds she elicited from the well-tuned instrument, forgetting, in her love of music, her friend and the news which she was so anxious to impart. She did not heed, when at last Bertha, trying to interrupt, called, "You said it was not long;" but went on, from leaf to leaf, from page to page, never stopping until the piece was finished, when, drawing breath, as if wanting to inhale even the last dying sound, she left the piano, saying, while reseating herself, "Is it not gloriously beautiful, Bertha?"

"I dare say it is, and another time I have no doubt I shall be as much in raptures over it as you are at present, but just now other thoughts are in my mind."

"Well, then, out with them, my friend. What important news did you come to tell me?"

"There is to be a ball next Monday!"

"Ah? this is agreeable news. Before you go deeper into

the subject, wait one moment longer. My work-table is just behind you, — will you move it here to my side? for, like you, I dare not be idle a minute. This is a cushion for a chair which I mean to give to my father as a Christmas present," she explained, holding up a piece of work nearly finished. "Do you like it?"

"Very much indeed. But now about the ball."

"Directly, Bertha, one moment longer. One, two — three, two green, three red, and one white. Now I am all attention. Where is this ball to be, and where did you get the information from?"

"It is to be held at the club-house, and will be the first ball of the season. I read it in the newspaper this morning, and thinking you might not happen to look at the paper, I hurried to let you know."

"You were correct. I never thought of the paper, for I was practising all the morning."

"What do you mean to wear, Willma?"

"First, I must see whether I can coax my father into taking me there, and, if I succeed, I shall write to my sister Thusnelda, telling her the colors of the dress and flowers I mean to wear, and then leave all the rest to her and to my dressmaker's exquisite taste."

"How easy everything is for you!" Bertha sighed, despondingly. "You have only to order and need not trouble yourself further, while I have to turn and to refit old dresses, always counting the cost."

"This is unfair; you always look very pretty, and the many attentions which are paid to you are proofs of it. What do *you* mean to wear?"

"White, for it is the cheapest."

"Also the most becoming, my friend," said Willma. "Let me see. Pink becomes your complexion. Why should you not have some white fleecy stuff trimmed with pink? I have a beautiful wreath, of small blush roses covered with a sort of shiny dust, which glitters beautifully in the gaslight. You might wear it, and I am persuaded you would look very handsome in

it. Have your hair in curls; light hair always looks best dressed that way. What do you say to my advice?"

"What should I say, but that you are very kind? I am sure though," she added, fretfully, "that if I propose pink, my sister will want the same color."

"Never mind your sister; advise her to wear blue, which really becomes her well, and tell her that I have a beautiful wreath of forget-me-nots, which I would lend her."

"Thanks, Willma; you are very good. Yes, yes, this would do admirably. But what are *you* going to wear? Neither pink nor blue, I can see; but what then?"

"You shall know in time, Bertha. I hear my father coming, and must impart the news to him at once."

"How cold you look, papa!" she greeted him fondly, as he entered the room.

"Yes, the wind cuts sharp," answered Dr. Perclass, shutting the door behind him, and rubbing his hands. "Good-morning, Miss Bauer."

"Sit down, papa, and you will soon feel comfortable. Here are your warm shoes. I kept them under the stove, and here is your dressing-gown. How do you feel now?" she asked, standing a little off, and looking at him lovingly.

"Quite pleasant, my child; thanks to your care."

"Here is the paper, which I am sure you have not read yet."

"Had no time to think of it, my dear; however, give it to me now."

"There is great news in it, papa, — great news, which will create excitement in many quarters."

"Indeed; about what, Willma, — about what? Where the deuce did I put my spectacles again?" he muttered, putting his hands from pocket to pocket.

"You need not be in such a hurry, papa; I can tell you all about it."

"Be quick, then. Why do you keep me in suspense, child? What is it?"

"There is to be" — trying hard to keep a grave face — "a ball at the club-house."

A slightly petulant stamp on the floor, accompanied by the exclamation of "Bother your ball!" was the answer. "And *this* is your news?" he asked at last, looking half frowningly into his daughter's face.

"Yes, papa," she replied, demurely, "and very interesting for *us*. Is it not, Bertha?"

"Certainly," was the reply, "and it will create a great deal of excitement in many a quarter;" and the two girls broke out at last with ringing laughter, which nearly set Dr. Perclass angry with vexation.

"This means that you want to go, and that I shall have to take you, eh?"

"Assuredly, papa, and you would never be so cruel as to deny me this request," she said, coaxingly, laying her arms around his neck.

For a short time he tried to resist her caresses, but when he saw it was of no avail, and the soft, loving arms kept clinging closer and closer, he threw himself back in his chair, saying, with assumed despair, "I give in, I—yes, yes, I see that I shall have to go with you."

"This is a good, loving darling. Thank you, dear papa. I should not have told you so soon; but you see we always have some preparations to make for these occasions, and —"

"Another hint, I know. This is an attack on my purse. I must submit to everything. O Miss Bauer, what victims we fathers are! How I pity yours, who has two daughters! I have only one, and see how I am dragged about!"

"My father does not think himself victimized," said Bertha, laughingly.

"I do not believe a word of it, begging your pardon for contradicting a lady, but I should like to hear the other party first," said Dr. Perclass, withdrawing to his study.

"Now, my dear, nothing remains but to write the letter to my sister. Amuse yourself in the mean time with anything; it will not take me more than a few minutes." So saying, Willma drew a writing-desk towards her, and began to write rapidly.

"Done!" she gayly exclaimed. "I have told Thusnelda that

I wanted a dress made of cherry-colored crêpe, the skirts looped up with white camellias. I should also wish to wear these flowers in my hair, either shaped into a wreath, or simply in sprays, as the latest fashion may suggest it. I mentioned also that the bouquet to carry in my hand I would get here, as I think it easy to procure fresh camellias at the florist's."

"Superb and beautiful! Willma, you will look charmingly. And how will you dress your hair? Curls too, like mine?"

"No, black hair never looks well in curls, — it is too heavy. I mean to have it brushed back quite plain, the braids wound around my head."

"Yes," said Bertha, "that will look best; and now good-by. I shall be busy until Monday. Shall I see you before?"

"Perhaps so. By-the-by, my dear," said Bertha, opening the door again, "do you know that Augustus Arnold has come back from his travels?"

"Who is Augustus Arnold? Not the brother of Edward Arnold?"

"Certainly; but neither you nor I can remember him, as he had left Moosdorf before we were grown up. But now he is back again, and — take care of your heart, Willma; it might, after all, get touched for once, you know! He certainly is very handsome. I saw him yesterday, arm in arm with his brother, passing our house. He is not so tall as Edward, but has that pensive, thoughtful look which attracts so greatly. Good-by, and — beware!"

CHAPTER III.

MOTHER AND SONS.

THE ball was a brilliant success. All the members of the club-house attended it, with their wives, daughters, and sons. The heads of the families had first accompanied their charge into

the ballroom, and then retired to their favorite smoking-rooms, where they soon were deep in politics, enjoying their pipes, and emptying overflowing glasses, filled with the foaming and freshly tapped lager, — the beverage of all classes in that country. The mothers, in the mean time, were not idle, for they had to keep a close lookout for their daughters; frowning if a presuming clerk, with no prospects, was paying too close attention to their darlings, and smiling approvingly if they were addressed by rich merchants, or famous savans; keeping up all the while a pleasant flow of discourse with some matron about other people's family matters, or some newly discovered scandal; greatly interested in the former and properly horrified at the latter; refreshing themselves now and then with some confectionery and an occasional sip of fine wine.

The young ladies, in turn, enjoyed themselves in *their* way: dancing, flirting, and coquetting with their eyes; smiling, whispering, and hiding all behind fragrant bouquets, making these little acts all the more charming by the conscious blushes which accompanied them.

Augustus Arnold was only a passive attendant at this lively ball; serious amongst the gay, and thoughtful in all this merry company. He was leaning, almost all the evening, against one of the large, massive pillars which upheld the arched ceiling of the ballroom, watching the young couples as they whirled past him in the graceful dance, but letting his eyes rest longest and most admiringly on one young figure, clad in crêpe of pale cherry color, and sprays of wax-like camellias in her dark hair, with a small but exquisite bouquet of the same flowers, at which she sometimes looked thoughtfully, and then, raising her eyes from it, would glance curiously around the room, while a puzzled expression, now and then, could be seen in her face. So intent was he in his observations, that he did not notice the questioning looks of wonder, which were constantly levelled at him, nor the whisperings passing from one to another, why *he*, so young, did not also mix with the dancers.

At last the ball was over; parents began to make motions to depart; carriages were called for, and the room rapidly clearing.

"Well, brother mine," said a gay voice to Augustus, and an arm was at the same time thrown around his neck, "still at your post? How the deuce do you manage to be able to stand a whole evening in one place, making a face like a parson, when every one else is merry? Once or twice I found time to come up to you, and once I even attempted to ask you whether you wished to be introduced to Miss Perclass, whom you were staring at the whole evening. Not that I myself would have put you through this ceremony. I should not care to take notice of that lady," he added, contemptuously, while a malicious sneer passed quickly over his face; "but one of my friends might have done himself the honor of presenting such an easy prey to the remorseless beauty. But, as I say, to my question I received no answer, only an impatient shrug, and a sort of growl, so I departed to more pleasant occupation, and made love to half-a-dozen young ladies, who were greatly flattered by my marked attentions; for you must know that I am the darling of the fair sex, and many a heart beats when Edward Arnold draws nigh!"

"Still the same!" said Augustus. "Be careful that you do not boast once too often. But now let us go home; the room is nearly empty. Has the carriage arrived?"

"Long ago; but I sent it back again, letting our mother know that we should be late this evening, and therefore would walk home. You are satisfied with this arrangement? It is a beautiful, clear night, the walk will do us good, and it is, after all, not more than a mile to our home."

"I am glad you have done so, Edward. I always enjoy a walk after a ball. Come on."

The two brothers lit their cigars, linked their arms, and left for home. They exchanged few words, walking side by side until they reached a large gate, opening into a handsome garden, over which the moon now poured her silvery light, making every object appear distinct as if it were day. Through the trees, farther away from the street, could be seen a large house built after the newest style, to which the two young men now

bent their steps, following the broad avenue overshadowed by tall old oak-trees on both sides.

"There are lights, so I suppose our mother is still up," said Edward, breaking the silence, while he threw away the end of his cigar; "a sometimes very inconvenient habit of hers, of which I cannot cure her either by entreaties nor remonstrance."

Opening the door with a latch-key, they entered a spacious hall paved with black and white marble, and furnished with heavy oak-chairs, which stood in rows against the dark wainscoted walls. A large Black-Forest clock was ticking in its old-fashioned case. Its hands showed the hour of two. A girl came out from a side door, telling them to enter, as their mother had not yet retired for the night.

"What, Barbara, you up too?" queried Edward, "and your eyes still as bright as if it were eight o'clock in the morning, instead of two hours after midnight?"

"Mother, what makes you stay up so late? indeed it cannot be good for your health," said Augustus, after having entered the room, walking towards an old lady, who was sitting near a stove, buried in a well-cushioned easy-chair, and with a bright, thick shawl wrapped carefully around her.

"Not to mention Barbara's pretty eyes, which will surely look heavy to-morrow from want of sleep," added Edward.

"I was curious to hear how Augustus amused himself the first night after his return to his native town. Sit down here, my sons, and tell me what and whom you have seen this evening? Did you meet your cousin Marie Gärtner?"

"Yes," replied Edward, "she was there."

"And what do you think of her, Augustus?"

"Oh, do not ask him, mother, for he, I am sure, does not even remember that I introduced him to her. Do you, brother, now, upon your honor?"

"I certainly remember that you introduced me to a lady; that I bowed, and that she held out her hand in return; but whether it was my cousin, or somebody else, truly I cannot tell."

"There," laughed Edward; "did I not tell you so, mother?"

He behaved the whole evening in the most extraordinary manner. He neither danced, nor drank, nor smiled, but stood all the time leaning against a pillar, a passive looker-on. When I once went up to him to introduce him to Miss Perclass —”

“And why to that lady in particular?” asked his mother, quickly, while a frown crossed her haughty features.

“Why? Because he was looking at her all the time. While she was dancing, his eyes ever followed her, and when she was standing or sitting his looks still were riveted on her face.”

“What did such strange behavior mean, my son?” she asked, turning her eyes uneasily towards him.

“Nothing, dear mother,” while an amused smile came into his eyes; “but that I did not see anything else worth looking at. Had I known that I had to go through such close inquisition, perhaps I should have conducted myself better.”

“You know, my son,” said his mother, visibly relieved by his answer, “that I never mix in society now, and therefore it amuses me to hear of it as much as possible, and it interests me doubly if the informants are my own children. But is this Miss Perclass really so very beautiful?”

“Beautiful is not the word, mother,” said Augustus, warmly; “in fact, I cannot express the charm or spell that face throws over one. She is perfectly fascinating.”

His brother quickly left his seat, trying to hide from Augustus the angry flush which he felt dyed his forehead at these words, and his mother’s eyes almost flashed sparks of angry fire, while her hands kept nervously twitching the fringe of her shawl. Her voice sounded harsh and unnatural, when after listening to her son’s enthusiastic outburst, she said, “Enough of this nonsense. I wish to speak of something which is best to be said now; therefore listen to me, my sons, and remember well, that what I say now I mean forever. I am wealthy, and all my wealth will one day be equally divided between you two; with one condition, however: each of you must marry richly.”

“But, mother —”

“No interruptions, Augustus,” said the old lady. “It is necessary that you should do so, in order that our family should

always be as it has been, as long as I can remember, the first, and of the highest standing in this city. But you must not only marry well, but also — and I wish this even more than wealth — into good old families. Our own can boast, as far back as I can remember, that no low-born ancestors ever have borne our name. This has been on the side of your father as well as of mine. There have always been gentlewomen and gentlemen who bore our name. Therefore, if you look around for wives, you must bear in mind these two conditions, and I do not think it very difficult for you to succeed. I should wish — but in this I let you have your own choice — that one of you would marry your cousin Marie Gärtner. She is handsome, accomplished, and wealthy, and would look well at the head of one's table."

"And has a temper like a devil," murmured Edward, but loud enough for his mother to hear.

"Which my eldest son would know well how to curb," she said.

"Mother," and the younger son's voice sounded somewhat impatient, even indignant, "you have overlooked some very important points."

"What may these be?"

"Our feelings. Should our affections have no voice in that matter?"

"Feelings!" replied the old lady, while a motion of her aristocratic hand showed the utter contempt with which she treated this question; "feelings and affections are all very well for low and inferior classes, but can be dispensed with by persons of our position."

"Exactly, mother," said Edward; "quite right; one may love one, admire the other, and still marry the third."

"Good-night, mother," said Augustus, quickly rising, while dissatisfaction was written on his face.

"Good-night, both of you. I have dealt fairly with you; act accordingly."

A heavy feeling came over Augustus after retiring to his room. Youth seemed to have left him, and he felt himself suddenly an old man. What can my mother have against

Miss Perclass? It is no trifling reason which made her eyes flash, and her hands shake, when I spoke of her wonderful beauty, — and she *is* beautiful! Oh, how lovely she looked at the florist's, wrapped up all in fur! How that fellow could resist her entreaties to sell her those few camellias, I cannot understand. However, it was all for the best; it allowed me to send her some from *our* garden. How puzzled she sometimes seemed, when she looked at the small bouquet, and how thoughtfully she let her beautiful eyes rove over the ballroom, as if to ask, "*Where has this come from?*"

"He is half in love with her already," murmured Edward to himself, while preparing for bed; "but she shall not succeed in winning his heart. No, no, a thousand times no;" and with an angry oath he threw himself on his bed. "Why is my mother so dead-set against her, I should like to know? And I shall find it out too." With this consoling intention he turned towards the wall and was soon in a heavy sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER THE BALL.

"I AM glad you have come," said Willma, receiving her friend at the door; "we have not seen each other since the ball, and have much to tell."

"Have you seen him?"

"Seen whom?"

"Why, Augustus Arnold, who just now has ridden past your house, looking as attentively at the windows as if he were paid for counting them."

"I must plead guilty of not having noticed him," said Willma, with a smile.

"How handsome he looked on his black horse. I wish you could have seen him. But, Willma, was it not strange that he refused to be introduced to you at the ball?"

"Declined to be introduced to me? And did anybody wish to do so?"

"Oh, I forgot, we have not met since the ball. Yes, his brother asked him. I was standing behind Augustus, when Edward came up, laying his arm around his neck, and said, 'Shall I make you acquainted with Miss Perclass?' What the answer was I could not hear; but I saw him shrug his shoulders as if impatient, and Edward then left him."

A flush of annoyance overspread Willma's features at hearing this, but, raising her head proudly, she said, "It does not matter. I enjoyed myself very much, nevertheless."

"Of course you did," said her friend; "but how did you like Mr. Miller? Is he not a perfect gentleman?"

"What, a new flame, Bertha?" asked Willma. "What a large and impressive heart my friend possesses! However, I cannot allow myself to judge about this fortunate object of your praise, for I had the honor of dancing with him only once."

"Yes, your time was too much taken up by Mr. Herbert, your faithful worshipper. Why, Willma, what *can* he mean?"

"I hope, for goodness' sake," replied her friend, "that he means nothing but that we should enjoy ourselves pleasantly every time we meet, for to converse with him is indeed pleasure."

"Nonsense, Willma; you must know that Mr. Herbert means much more, and it is a riddle to me that he has not told you so long ago."

"Do not say so, Bertha; you make me feel uneasy. If he were really so foolish, our intercourse would have to cease, and I should be deprived of many a happy hour."

"It is almost impossible for me to believe, Willma, that you do not love him."

"I assure you, Bertha, the thought never entered my mind."

"Very well, you must know best, but I believe that it has entered Mr. Herbert's mind. However, there is something else I want to ask, — How is it that Carl Baumann did not pay his usual attentions to you?"

"For the simple reason that he could not let well alone, and wanted more than friendship, and got nothing at all."

"You do not mean to say that he proposed to you, and that you refused his offer?" cried Bertha, in astonishment.

"This I exactly do mean."

"What, refuse Carl Baumann! — one of the most handsome, one of the richest men in town? Impossible, Willma; absurd!"

"You forgot another quality, as well known as the other two, — he is also one of the most dissipated."

"Nonsense! he would have made an all the better husband, for having sown his wild oats, and you could have managed him well."

"If I marry, I do not want to reform my husband. I mean to choose a man who does not need that."

"You certainly have strange ideas, but — as you please. Tell me now where you got that beautiful bouquet of yours. The florist, you said, had only two more camellias, and those, he informed you, were as good as sold, so he could not let you have them. Where, then, did you get such a perfect bouquet?"

"This is as much a riddle to me as to you. I thanked Mr. Herbert for it, as soon as I had an occasion; but he positively denied all knowledge of it, and he would surely have told me, for he has sent me many a one, and never made a secret of having done so. It puzzled me the whole evening, and I often looked amongst the crowd for one to whom I might be indebted for this present, but with no result; and it is most curious that any one could have known exactly the particular flowers I wanted."

"Very strange and mysterious," mused her friend. "I never mentioned to any one what you would wear. Well, we will find it out yet."

"Perhaps so," answered Willma. "Do you not bring any particular news?"

"Nothing but what we have already talked over."

"Then I shall be this time the first to impart to you that we shall have a fine concert next week at the club-house. The Milanolos have arrived, and the club has engaged them for an evening. My sister writes that they have given concerts at Rosenfeld, and succeeded immensely at the capital."

"Delightful!" cried Bertha. "We all must go. I suppose the tickets have to be procured early?"

"Yes, indeed; my father has secured our seats already."

"Then I must go to tell my father. I would not miss this for the world. Good-by, Willma, good-by!"

CHAPTER V.

THE CONCERT.

THE concert-room of the club-house was crowded on the evening of the performance. Mr. Bauer had secured seats close to those of Dr. Perclass, and Bertha and Willma were near each other.

The first part of the concert was over when Dr. Perclass was called away to attend a sick person. He informed his daughter of it, telling her at the same time that he would be back before the time of going home.

The performance was over, and the room was rapidly clearing. Mr. Bauer offered to see Willma home; but she declined, saying that she was sure her father would yet come; he might even now be waiting at the entrance-porch to receive her. In the mean time she would go to the dressing-room, and, if they should see him, while going down, they could tell him where he would find her.

Every one else had gone. The lights had been extinguished, and only a solitary candle was still burning in the room where Willma waited. The wardrobe-woman was fidgeting around, evidently anxious to close the place, throwing, from time to time, impatient looks towards the young lady who prevented her doing so. Willma began to repent not having accepted Mr. Bauer's escort, and was about to ask the woman to go home with her, when hasty steps were heard in the hall. Thinking

that it must be her father, she went quickly to the door and — ran nearly into the arms of Augustus Arnold. Very much confused at the unexpected encounter, she hastily drew back, when he said, hesitatingly, and trying to hide his surprise, "I believe I have the honor of addressing Miss Perclass."

"That is my name."

"Would I presume too much if I were to ask —"

"Why I am placed in such an awkward position?" Willma completed, smilingly, seeing him stop in the middle of his question. "Because my father, being obliged to leave the concert to visit a patient, and promising to come back before the performance was over, I, expecting him from one minute to the other, refused Mr. Bauer's kind offer to see me home. I was just on the point of leaving when I heard your steps, and thinking it must be my father, met you thus unceremoniously."

"My name is Arnold, — Augustus Arnold."

She acknowledged the introduction by a slight bend of her head.

"If you would please to allow me to escort you to your home I should esteem myself very happy."

"I have no other choice but to accept your kindness."

"I am at your service, Miss Perclass." So saying, he stepped back to let her pass.

"I believe I had the pleasure of seeing you at the last ball?" he said, as soon as they had reached the street.

"Very likely, if you were there."

"Yes, I was there, although only as a passive observer; from which, however, I derived as much pleasure as if I had mixed with the dancers. I also had nearly the happiness to be introduced to you."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. My brother told me afterwards that he came to me in the course of the evening on purpose to introduce me. Of this I am, however, quite unconscious. My brother said that, instead of an answer, he only received from me an impatient shrug, and he therefore left me to myself."

"Did you say," asked Willma, "that it was Mr. Edward Arnold who offered to do this?"

"Yes, my brother Edward. But why? Is anything strange in that?"

"Perhaps not—but—never mind. You said you enjoyed yourself?" Willma asked, quickly.

"Very much; but you? It seemed to me as if you were at times preoccupied, and as if your eyes were seeking for something."

"You must have been, indeed, a close observer," replied Willma. "I was puzzled, and there is no need to make a secret of it. I had a bouquet of camellias sent to me for that evening, and for the life of me I cannot discover the giver. You know it is so usual to receive such presents that nobody would deny it. You can, therefore, imagine my surprise when none of the gentlemen whom I thanked for it would accept my thanks, assuring me that they had not sent me those very particular flowers. I had received for that occasion several other bouquets, but, happening, also, to wear camellias in my hair, I had chosen to wear one made of the same flowers. It must have been a mere accident, of course, which induced that mysterious unknown to send camellias to me, as nobody could have known what I intended to wear that evening. Confess, Mr. Arnold, is this not enough to puzzle any girl's brains?"

"It is, indeed, Miss Perclass; but since you say that nobody would think to make a secret of sending a bouquet to a lady —"

"I mean flowers for a ball," interrupted Willma, hastily.

"Very well, then, flowers for such an occasion. I suppose I, also, should confess that *I* was at the florist's when you entreated him so vainly to sell two camellias to you. Seeing that you did not succeed, and knowing that we had such flowers in our garden, I took the liberty of resolving that you should not be disappointed, although that fellow showed himself so hard-hearted."

"What!" exclaimed Willma, astonished, drawing back; "*you*, an entire stranger, to rob your garden for my benefit?"

"Not a stranger from henceforth, if you will so please, Miss Perclass."

"That would be black ingratitude," said Willma, laughing gayly, "after you have extricated me from two dilemmas: this

evening from being imprisoned in the club-house, perhaps to be found next morning eaten up by rats or mice, and at another time from having to go through the mortification of appearing at the first ball of the club-house with camellias in my hair and fuchsias and roses in my hand. No small annoyance this would have been, I can assure you."

"Thank you, Miss Perclass. When we meet again, may I consider myself introduced?"

"By all means. But if you like to go through the ceremony again, you may do so; it will be the more fun."

With these gayly spoken words she bade him good-night, and entered her house. "Now this I call an adventure," she thought, when alone. "What will Bertha say? I shall write a note to her early to-morrow, and beg her to come to see me as soon as possible."

The figure of Augustus, as he had appeared in the door of the club-room, asking her so gracefully, and in such gentlemanly manner, to allow her to be escorted home by him, was the last that Willma saw, in her mind, before falling asleep.

CHAPTER VI.

PUZZLED.

SWEET was the spell this meeting had thrown over Augustus, and he was in no hurry, after having left *her* whose charms bewitched him, to cast off the delicious feelings which held all his thoughts and made his soul thrill with unknown joy. With springy step, and a heart full of sunshine, he had reached the gate which led to his home. It seemed that neither cold nor the cutting December wind had been felt by him; for, after having entered his room, he hastily threw off his overcoat, opened the window, and allowed the piercing air to cool his flushed and

burning brow. Thus he stood, not heeding how the time passed, thinking of nothing in particular, but still inexpressibly happy, trying to remember every word she had spoken, lingering lovingly on the recollection of every smile that had passed over her lovely countenance, and which his pliant memory had only too faithfully treasured. At last the clock struck one, and the loud, solemn sound awakened him from his dreams. Recalled to himself, he sighed deeply, and reluctantly prepared for rest. Sweet pictures of a happy future came into his sleep, and kept dancing before him until the morning sunshine broke through his window, wakening him to the reality of life.

He dressed quickly, for his watch told him that it was nearly eight o'clock, the usual hour for breakfast, and he knew that his mother did not like to wait. He found her sitting at the table when he entered the room. Hastening up to her, he pressed the accustomed morning kiss upon her cheek, begging her not to be annoyed at his late appearance.

"It does not matter, Augustus. I have only just now come down myself. You have overslept yourself. You came home later than your brother last night? Had you some engagement, or an adventure?" something akin to a smile playing on her usually stern features.

"I had indeed an adventure, and one of a very pleasant kind."

"Indeed?"

A short laugh from Edward was the only sign that he had listened to what was said.

"May we hear of it?" she asked.

"Certainly, for I do not see any reason why it should remain a secret. I got an introduction to Miss Perclass last evening."

Again that dry laugh from his brother, while a conscious flush rose to his brow.

"And is this so very extraordinary to deserve the name of an adventure?" asked his mother, while an unpleasant expression came in her eyes.

"It is the way in which it happened that makes it uncom-

mon," said Augustus. "Let me relate it, and you will soon think with me." He then told all, in a plain, straightforward manner. When he had done, he asked, as if recollecting suddenly, "By-the-by, Edward, what have you against Miss Perclass, or rather what have you both against each other?"

"Why?" questioned his brother, quickly, as if stung. "What did she say to make you think so?"

"I told her that I got nearly introduced to her at the ball, and by you —"

"What a fool you were!"

"You forget yourself," said his mother, sharply, eying him at the same time suspiciously; "your brother behaved in this matter altogether as a gentleman ought to behave to a lady who is placed, as Miss Perclass evidently was, in such an awkward position. As to his remarking that you wished to introduce him to her, I can positively see nothing foolish in having done so; unless" — and she looked keenly at her eldest son — "*there is indeed a reason why it should be foolish.*"

"I beg your pardon," said Edward, recollecting himself, "I was too hasty. The fact is, I am out of sorts this morning. I was greatly annoyed last night."

"All right, brother; I did not mind your outburst."

"But *I* wish that in future, when you happen to be in ill-humor, you will please avoid my presence, until you are able to show the proper respect to your mother," said Mrs. Arnold, displeased, and not at all deceived by the apology. "I should like to remark, however, on this occasion, that the less my two sons have to do with Miss Perclass the better I shall like it; for no matter how lovely, rich, or accomplished she may be, I can never recognize her as my daughter-in-law."

"May I ask why *you*, also, are against this young lady?" said Augustus. "Her family is unobjectionable, as far as I know."

"Then you know very little," remarked the old lady, getting visibly excited; "her father is of low origin; his brothers are all either farmers or school-masters."

"I never knew, mother, that you knew Dr. Perclass," said Edward, watching her closely.

"I *did*, however, and you need not be puzzled about it."

But the two *did* puzzle themselves, and often did Augustus ask himself, that day, why both mother and brother were so very much prejudiced against her, whom he admired so greatly; and a feeling of sadness stole over him and forebodings of coming evil began to cast shadows upon his heart.

CHAPTER VII.

ONLY EXCEPTIONAL.

SINCE that fondly cherished evening, Mr. Augustus Arnold and Miss Perclass had not met. He was chafing inwardly against the stern etiquette which forbade his visiting her occasionally. He had passed her several times on the street, but excepting an earnest look, into which he tried to throw as much of his feelings as possible, a formal bow was all the recognition he received, for so ruled the fatal custom of that country. Every afternoon, precisely at two o'clock, he rode past her house, making the allowed *window parade*, which nobody could hinder, and which is about the only open attention a young gentleman may pay to a young lady in Germany except on public occasions. There he had the unsatisfactory satisfaction of seeing her, sometimes sitting with her work before her, or watering her flowers, with which the whole window-sill was filled. A bow, a flitting smile, a lingering look, and — all was over. Such meagre food could not content his hungry heart, for he could not, and indeed did not want to, hide from himself that now he loved truly and forever. This love had grown from day to day, from hour to hour. His thoughts were hers since he had first seen her, and his heart was in her keeping before he had been aware of it.

It was only two weeks before Christmas, — the time when ladies often frequent all kinds of shops, to buy cloth, gloves, con-

fectioneries, knick-knacks for the tree, — and therefore Augustus patronized every sort of shop or store in the hope of meeting Willma. All was of no avail.

One evening his brother and he were comfortably enjoying their cigars, when, in sheer despair, and hoping against hope to hear perhaps of some way by which a young gentleman might be allowed to visit a lady, he asked, "Brother, how is it that I never see you visit a lady?"

Edward removed his cigar from his lips, turned slowly a look of utter astonishment upon the querist, and asked, "What do you mean?"

"I mean what I asked; *why* do you never pay visits to any lady?"

"I am not aware that I am engaged to one, — are you?"

"And is that, then, the only way to get the privilege of visiting a lady? You know I have been away for so many years, in fact, before I ever cared for the customs of the fashionable world, that I may be excused for sometimes asking for information in these matters."

"Truly, brother, this is the only way that your strange question can be explained, which otherwise would sound ridiculous. In other countries such things may be permitted, but with us they are only exceptions; unless, as I before remarked, you are engaged to a lady. *Then* you may visit her at any time of the day, invite her anywhere, and speak to her if you meet her on the street; otherwise you cannot break this rule, else the lady would very soon be thought very little of."

"Do you not think, Edward, that this goes a little too far?"

"Perhaps so," replied his elder, carelessly, wrapping himself in a perfect cloud of smoke, through which he managed to watch his brother closely; "but you know what you never had you can never miss. Why do you put this question, though? Have *you* any inclination that way?"

"To tell the truth," replied the younger, laughing, "I should not be averse to less strict etiquette."

Both smoked on in silence after this, following their own thoughts; one musing on what might be the cause of these ques-

tions, the other confessing to himself that there was no loop-hole for him, and that he had either to submit to the rules of society or create an exception from these inconveniently strict laws.

Fortune seemed inclined to favor Augustus in his endeavors to meet Willma again, for very soon after that conversation he happened to pass through one of the by-streets of Moosdorf, when he perceived a shining object on the snow; picking it up, he found it to be a small silver box, opening with a spring, lined with red velvet, and having the initials "W. P." engraved upon it. Here was an opportunity of seeing Miss Perclass, of which he was not slow in taking advantage.

He started for her dwelling at once, thanking his lucky stars for granting him his most ardent wishes so promptly. After having repeatedly knocked at a half-open door without getting an answer, he pushed it open and entered. He saw a small closet or pantry, in which Miss Perclass stood in close conversation with a servant, to whom she seemed to be explaining something. He drew back, and knocking again, this time much louder, was told, by a clear, ringing voice, to come in.

"Mr. Arnold," said Willma, coming out of the pantry, "I am glad to see you; but you have mistaken the room; this is not my father's apartment. Catherina," — turning to her servant, — "show this gentleman to the office."

"Dr. Perclass is gone out, Miss Willma," answered the girl.

"You are unfortunate," said the young lady. "Papa is gone out and I cannot even tell you what time he will be back again."

"I am sorry not to have the pleasure of meeting Dr. Perclass; but as my visit this time is to you, I am not so unfortunate after all."

"To me? To what happy circumstance do I owe this pleasure?"

"Have you not lost some article?" asked Mr. Arnold in return, not at all discouraged by this not very warm reception.

"I do not think I have; at least I have not missed anything."

"I have found this silver box," — handing it to her, — "and as it

has your initials engraved on it, I thought it might perhaps be yours."

"It certainly is mine; but how I could have lost it without missing it astonishes me. However, I am very much obliged to you. It seems," she added, with a smile and a blush, "that whenever we meet I have to thank you for some kindness or attention."

"I wish I could do more for you. These are trifles not worth speaking of."

"Oh, but they are," interrupted Willma, quickly. "Is it not pleasant," she added, softly, "when one can think of a person only with the memory of kind and friendly actions?"

"Dear Miss Perclass, how I thank you for these words! They show me that you have not forgotten me."

"How could I, without being ungrateful?" she said, simply. "And now again this little box. You seem determined not to let me forget you."

"To be always present in your thoughts would, indeed, be the richest reward for the few trifling favors, if you will so call them, I have been so fortunate as to confer on you," cried the young man, warmly, while his eyes gazed, with unspoken love, on her beautiful countenance, whose blushes showed that she understood the meaning of his words and looks.

"You find me to-day in the middle of the preparations for the holidays," she went on, quickly. "This last week is entirely destined for finishing off all the little things which are so necessary to make Christmas pleasant and attractive. By-the-by, you must taste some of my sweetmeats. I made them with my own hands, and you shall judge whether I do or do not understand my business of home-confectioner."

So saying, she went to the door and gave her orders to a servant. Presently the girl came in with a small waiter.

"Now, Mr. Arnold, taste these, and take a glass of wine; and if you have not lost all taste of what is nice, I am sure you will help yourself again."

"They are, indeed, delicious, and do you infinite credit. I should have supposed that this last week before Christmas is

the particular time for ladies to visit the shops to purchase the necessary articles for Christmas presents?" asked Augustus, after having partaken of the sweetmeats set before him.

"Oh, no; you were quite mistaken. The gifts are either made long ago, or bought mostly two or three weeks before they are actually wanted, because, in the last week, every one is busy with making preparations at home."

"Then have I wasted my time indeed," said Augustus, half aloud.

"Why so, if I may ask?"

"Because, in the hope of seeing and meeting you, I have explored all kinds of stores, not knowing that these are the last places where my wishes would be realized."

"And why," asked Willma, "were you so anxious to meet and to see me?"

But no sooner were the words spoken than she could have bitten her tongue off, so vexed was she with herself for having spoken so thoughtlessly.

She was answered with only one look, but a look which expressed all what he dared not say as yet,—so sad and yearning, so full of love and tenderness, that, to hide her burning blushes, which seemed to scorch her neck and face; to conceal the tears which threatened to fall and still the beating of her heart, she was obliged to turn away, for no longer could she misunderstand his meaning.

He got up, rising as if from a stupor, and, taking her hand in his, and holding it long and pressing it gently, said, quickly, as if restraining himself:—

"Good-by, Miss Perclass;" and when she looked around he was gone. His absence was relief to her, and she hurried to her room, locked the door, and gave way to a flood of tears.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CONFESSION.

AUGUSTUS arrived at home, and reached his room like one dreaming. He could remember nothing but that he had held her hand long and tenderly, that she had not resented it, and that he had looked into the depth of those beautiful, truthful eyes, and there read no anger at the words he had been so bold as to speak. He had tasted again of what was dearest to him on earth, of the charms and loveliness of the girl he loved with all his heart. But now at home, and out of the influence of her presence, he began to sober down. He tried to collect his thoughts, and became aware that he had acted exactly contrary to his mother's wishes, ay, even against her most decided commands. He had to confess to himself that he had not tried to avoid Miss Perclass, but done all he could to find an opportunity of meeting her again. He now had either to bear his mother's anger, which he knew, from former occasions, was no slight and passing matter, and let her do her worst, or he must draw back and behave towards Miss Perclass like a villain, showing, by his future manner towards her, that he had meant nothing, and leave it to her either to despise him, or to view his past conduct as that of a heartless man of the world. These were painful thoughts for him to pursue, and difficult skeins to untangle. Had he been sure that his love were returned, it would not have puzzled him long how to decide, for his heart pointed only to *her*; but he knew nothing of her feelings towards him. Those downcast eyes, full with unshed tears, might have hidden love and affection; but they might also have shown confusion and maidenly shyness. Her head, turned away from him, might have hidden the revelation of what he would have given much to know; but, at the same time, there might have been only blushes of mortification at his unexpected presumption.

While thus occupied, his brother entered, and, as it seemed,

in not the most amiable humor. Throwing himself sulkily into an arm-chair, he first eyed Augustus long and attentively, saying, at last:—

“Brother, what in the world did you do to-day at the house of Dr. Perclass? You need not glare at me in this manner,” he added, seeing his brother wheeling around quickly in his chair, and looking at him with the greatest surprise. “I was merely passing there, when, to my astonishment, I saw you coming out. I was on the point of calling to you to stop, when you rushed on in such a hurry, and with such evident determination not to be disturbed, that I gave up my attempt to retain you. You seem to take a strange delight in flying in the face of our mother’s exact commands.”

Augustus moved uneasily in his chair, and gave no answer.

“Brother mine,” continued Edward, “your doings, you may say, are no business of mine, and, in a great measure, you are right, but, Augustus,”—and he came closer to him, laying his hand affectionately upon his younger brother’s shoulder, —“although it may seem strange for me to say so, for *I* am a careless kind of a fellow, who do not make much show of affection for any one, I love *you*, and do not like to see you get into mischief without speaking to you and putting everything plain before you, so that, if you should get into trouble, you can say to yourself, my brother warned me of it. Not now, Augustus,” he said, noticing his brother’s motion to speak; “let me finish. You love Miss Perclass, I know; but mark my words, brother, she will never be your wife.”

“Why are you so positive of that?”

“Because our mother would never consent. She has some kind of hatred against that family, the cause of which I shall make it my business to discover. You heard what she said on the evening of the ball, and she will surely fulfil her threat, for I never yet saw her go back from anything she had made up her mind to do.”

“We have a handsome fortune of our own, Edward, on which we might live handsomely.”

“That’s so, brother; we have a fortune left to us by our

father; but if you were as sane as you are the contrary at present you would know that we never could live on that. Our tastes and habits are too expensive for us to do with less than we have now. No, if married, we would need a great deal more. You think it an easy thing, just now, with all your romantic ideas of moonshine and love in a cottage; but let us not forget to look at it with sober eyes."

"Edward, I have allowed you to speak without interruption, but let it be my turn now. In point of money-matters and all that, you may be quite right; but in this case *this* is not all. Affections, feelings, and future happiness are objects to be rated a great deal higher than those mentioned by you. I love Miss Perclass, as you have correctly observed. I confess it to you frankly, for I am not ashamed of it. I do not know whether she returns my love, but I shall tell her of *my* feelings, and find out. She, I am assured, cares nothing for wealth, and if I explain to her that I am not so rich, as she, perhaps, thought me to be, she may not consider that a drawback to our union."

"Will you also tell her," asked his brother, "that our mother will not receive her as a daughter?"

"I shall also mention that," answered Augustus, firmly.

"And how do you think she will take it?" queried Edward again, while a sneer passed over his features.

"If Miss Perclass loves me, — as I hope my future wife will love me, — this communication may be a shock to her at first. But, knowing that she has nothing to reproach herself with, and that this objection can only be an old woman's fancy, she will not mind it, and, proud in our mutual love, we shall try to bear our mother's displeasure and live without her money."

Edward could no longer doubt that his brother was seriously in earnest, and that he was determined to act as he said.

While Augustus was yet speaking, Edward's features had undergone a visible change, — the sneer had disappeared and made room for an expression of such utter dejection and sadness as was pitiful to behold, in one usually so trifling and frivolous. His voice, when he next spoke, startled Augustus, so changed was it from the absence of its usual mocking tone.

Choking with suppressed emotion, he said at last, though faintly and almost inaudibly : —

“Brother, brother, have mercy ! Have pity ! Go back from what you intend to do. Try not to win her for yourself ; her — whom I — have loved so long ! O brother, I know *I* cannot make her love me, but do not *you* go on further !”

A groan, as if in pain, preceded the answer of Augustus. “You, too, Edward, you too ? This is indeed fatality ! But did you not say that your love is hopeless ? Then any other man might make her his wife, — why not I, who love her so truly ?”

“Devil ! to torture me so,” cried Edward, madly, throwing his arms about him wildly ; “do you not fear that I should grow desperate with jealousy ?”

“Brother, I shall draw back until *you* have tried your luck. I will leave home again for six months, and you may in that time try to win her. If you succeed, I shall travel a few years more, and school my heart to look upon her only — as my brother’s wife. Here is my hand,” he said, wearily, holding out one, while the other was pressed to his heart, as if to still its pain. “Let us not speak of it any more.”

“You are a noble fellow, Augustus,” said Edward, with surprise, “and your unselfish offer deserves something more. I will confess to you what I have never told another soul, and never will, but which your generous conduct has pressed from me. It is more than a year since I began to pay attention to Miss Perclass. I admired her then only a little more than other girls, for her exquisite beauty. Sure to meet with no obstacle, — for who would be so foolish, as to refuse Mr. Arnold, — I paid my homage to her, in a careless way, sure that I would be accepted whenever it would suit me to ask. Sometimes I was humbly waiting for her slightest wish ; another time I was cold, distant, paying court to other pretty girls, thinking Miss Perclass would be glad enough, whenever I saw fit to play the enamored lover again. So I went on for about a year. At last it suited me to propose. I wrote to her, not doubting that an eager acceptance of my hand — for of my heart I did not speak at all — would be the result. You can guess what the answer

was. If I had not been a vain fool, full of self-conceit, and spoiled by all the other girls, I might have foreseen what would follow ; but as it was, I had not the slightest fear. You may read her answer ; here it is."

He handed a note to his brother to read. It contained only a few lines : —

"DEAR SIR: As your hand does not seem to *me* such a valuable property as *you* evidently deem it, I decline accepting it.

"WILLMA PERCLASS."

"On receiving this," Edward resumed, "my eyes were opened, and I became convinced that Miss Perclass is a girl amongst hundreds, and then I began to love her passionately, madly ; all the more so because I knew it was hopeless, for she despised me."

Augustus had listened without once interrupting him ; he was afraid to give utterance to his feelings for fear of hurting him to the quick ; but when Edward had finished, he got up, saying, "I pity you sincerely ; but there is no help for it. You must bear the consequences of your conduct."

"But, brother, you will at least abstain from —"

"I can promise nothing, Edward. I would have given you the first chance of winning Miss Perclass, although the sacrifice would have been greater than you ever could have understood ; but, as it is, I now consider myself at liberty to act as I choose, and according to my own feelings." With these words he left the room.

Edward stood still for a little time, looking at the door, which had shut after his brother, but then lifted his arm and shook it threateningly after him, muttering, between his tightly closed teeth, "We shall see, we shall see, brother mine !"

CHAPTER IX.

A FASHIONABLE COUPLE.

"CHRISTMAS is at hand," said Mrs. Arnold to her sons one evening, as they were together in the large sitting-room. "One day more and it will be Christmas-eve. I intend having your cousin Marie here at the presentation of the gifts; but as their time for this ceremony also is Christmas-eve, and, consequently, she would not be able to leave home on that evening, I shall put off our distribution until the evening of Christmas-day. What do you say to this arrangement?"

"I think it excellent," answered Edward.

"Perhaps you perceive that I have a reason for going out of the usual way?" Getting no answer, she went on explaining. "You remember our conversation on the first evening of Augustus' return? I then expressed my wish that one of you should marry Marie. I left it entirely to yourselves which of you should choose her. I even went further than this; I mentioned that, if you should prefer any other lady than your cousin, I should not put any obstacle in your way, provided she possessed wealth and came from a family equal to our own. Now you understand, I presume, what I mean, and what I expect, if I invite your cousin for the Christmas festivities? If you have already chosen partners for life, — that means, settled your mind on particular young ladies, — you have to tell me so, for then I shall not invite Marie." Mrs. Arnold looked inquiringly at each of her sons, and, getting no answer, continued: "I do not mean to pry into your affairs, nor make you acknowledge what you, for some time yet, would rather keep to yourselves; but you must see how awkward it would be if I should ask your cousin, and nothing were to follow; for I do not only want to ask her here, but also wish that one of you should then make her a handsome present, — an act alone so out of the common, that she could not help guessing that there must be a reason for such particular attention."

"As I am the oldest," Edward answered at last, "*I* think to try my luck first with Marie. If I should not succeed," he added, stroking his beard complacently, and lazily watching the smoke of his cigar, as it rose in pale rings to the ceiling, "I make room for my brother."

"Quite right. This is only fair;" and a look of entire satisfaction settled on the matron's face. She went on: "And what does my youngest say?"

"Mother," said Edward, a little impatiently, "will it not be enough to get one son settled in life, at least at present? Leave Augustus alone, and be satisfied at having one of your favorite wishes fulfilled."

"Perhaps you are right, Edward. Besides, Augustus has not had much time to look about him amongst the ladies of our city."

"What would you say, mother," asked Augustus, "if our cousin's heart had chosen already, and she should decline Edward's attention?"

"If the chosen one were you," replied his mother, "I should be just as much satisfied."

"There is no fear of Marie ever letting her heart speak," said Edward, laughingly; "she has been well trained in the same school with us, and what *our* mother forgot, *her* mother surely pointed out to her daughter, in the art of getting excellently settled in this world. I can tell you, brother, our cousin is a most apt pupil. Position, riches, and good connexion, — these are her watchwords. Her teachers need not be ashamed of her. Now, mother, about this present. What shall I give her? You know what would suit a young lady better than I do."

"What would you say to a handsome set of pearls?"

"Rather extravagant, considering that nothing is settled yet."

A look of scorn for his want of confidence in his success, and a short "We can afford it, I hope," answered him.

"Very well; I shall go to Rosenfeld to-morrow to buy the jewelry, and I promise to do my best on Christmas-day."

On Christmas-evening, when Marie had admired the rich gift, well knowing what it meant, and had accepted the compliments

of aunt and cousin, who said how well it would become her complexion, and all that, Edward contrived to get her to himself, and then made up his mind to strike while the iron was hot. He asked her in an expressive whisper whether she could not guess *why* he had presented her with that set? And when a confessing blush answered him, he proceeded to tell her that it had been his mother's most cherished wish to see them married; that he, too, long ago had fondly hoped to call her his wife, and asked whether he had hoped in vain.

"You will see my parents, Edward, and take your answer from them; for on their decision depends my favoring your suit or not."

"You speak as I expected," said Edward, "and as a dutiful daughter ought to speak. I shall see your parents to-morrow." With these words they went to join the others.

The next day he paid a visit to his uncle and aunt, and left their house a betrothed man. Three weeks after, the betrothal took place in the house of the intended bride. All the splendor and wealth of the two families was exhibited; toasts and health were drank in rare wines; congratulations were presented, and the future happiness of the youthful couple was accepted as a matter of no doubt. The wedding was to be in September, on the lady's birthday, and, in the interval, the happy groom was expected to spend every spare hour with his lady love. Many purchases of furniture, dress, and all kinds of luxuries had to be made, and Mr. Arnold had to give his approval to everything. He had to ride with his future wife, — walk, travel, sing, dance with her, and escort her to gardens, concerts, balls, and parties. In short, his duty was to wait upon her slightest wishes, and seem happy in being allowed to gratify them. He knew how to do all this to perfection, and with such admirable ease, that his brother often wondered whether he really had forgotten his love for Miss Perclass.

No, he had not forgotten it, — never could cease to remember that he had been rejected, nor abandon the hope of being one day revenged for it. He watched his brother's proceedings closely, and there was hardly any act of his of which he had not cognizance.

CHAPTER X.

BY CHANCE.

BERTHA had gone to see her friend, brimful with curiosity, for she had heard some whisperings about Mr. Augustus Arnold paying marked court to Willma, and that he even had visited her. Gossip raised its hands, wondering what the world would come to.

The two friends had been sitting together for about half an hour without exchanging confidences, — Willma being intent on following the course of her thoughts, which must have been of a happy kind, judging by the joyous light that played in her eyes. Bertha was furtively watching her, not knowing how to begin her inquiries. At last, she asked, half timidly, half impatiently, "You have nothing to tell me, Willma, though we have not seen each other for a week?"

"Nothing very particular. Nothing worth speaking of has happened."

"Nothing? Has Mr. Arnold stopped making '*window parade*' to you?"

"Who told you that he does?" said Willma, blushing at the mention of that name.

"There must be some truth in it, or else you would not blush," said her friend. "However, I am not going to beat about the bush any longer, but ask you, point-blank, does Mr. Augustus Arnold make '*window parade*' to you every afternoon?"

"I cannot say, Bertha," replied Willma, smiling archly; "he certainly rides past this house every afternoon; but, you know, there are many other houses in the row."

"This is all very well to tell some one else, Willma; but it will not do with me, for I happen to know who sent you the bouquet of camellias, and also who escorted you home on the evening of that concert. Upon my word, a most beautiful beginning of an interesting romance, and he would be, indeed, more than human if he did not follow up his advantage. What

do people mean," Bertha inquired further, "by telling me, that he even visits you?"

A painful blush spread over Willma's features, and somewhat hotly she asked, "Who dares to meddle with my affairs?"

"Nay, my friend, not so hastily. If Mr. Arnold is seen to enter the house of a gentleman who happens to have a young and charming daughter, how can people who have eyes refrain from speaking about it?"

"May not Mr. Arnold have come to consult with my father?"

"Very likely, when Dr. Gärtner, his own uncle, is their family physician. Come, come, Willma, tell me the truth, and I can stop people's mouths with it."

"What care I what they say? Let them talk. Still I do not mean to deprive *you* of the comfort of defending me," said Willma, with a smile, "so here it is: Mr. Arnold certainly did come to see me."

"I call that cool," said Bertha, highly interested. "Go on."

"Well, he came to see me on business."

"What kind? Of love?"

"Do not speak nonsense, Bertha, but be sensible. He had found a silver porte-monnaie, with the initials W. P. engraven on the lid, and thinking it might be mine, he came to restore it to me. So you see there is not much love about such a trifle."

"We shall see," remarked Bertha, dryly. "He is very lucky, any way. Many an enamored swain might stalk about the streets without getting such a chance of being able to visit his lady-love."

"Do you mean one of *your* swains?" asked Willma, jokingly.

"Yes, I do," replied Bertha.

"And would you like them to visit you? You see that people make remarks about this one innocent call that Mr. Arnold made here."

"They would not speak about me, for I should manage the whole thing differently. I should tell all about it to Tom, Dick, and Harry. It would not be my fault, if, before the day was over, the whole town was in possession of the facts."

"I do believe you would."

"Now, Willma, let us go back to that visit. What did he say? What do you think of him? How are his manners?"

"For goodness' sake, stop," cried her friend. "How in the world should I be able to answer so many questions at once? Let us begin with one. I think him a perfect gentleman. His manners are very pleasing, and he is quiet and rather reserved. We did not speak much. He was sorry that papa was not at home."

"Very likely," remarked Bertha, quietly; "and so were you, of course?"

"If you want to hear, why do you not listen?" said Willma, laughing, in spite of herself.

"Go on. I could not help it."

"Then he told me how and where he found the *porte-monnaie*, made a few more trifling remarks, and took his leave."

"Indeed? So this is all? Well, mark my words, he comes again."

"Not very likely. He knows that it could not please me."

"He will find some other excuse. I assure you—" A sharp knock at the door interrupted her, and on Willma's "Come in," the door opened, and Mr. Arnold entered the room! A flash of joy in Willma's eye; but then the recollection that he ought not to have come again, and a flush of annoyance suffused her face.

"Mr. Arnold, my friend, Miss Bauer."

The introduction over, Mr. Arnold, who had noticed the expression of Willma's face, and attributed it to the right cause, hurried to explain the reason of his presence. "I beg your pardon, ladies, for thus intruding on you, but, riding past the house, I saw this little child," — here he brought forward a dirty little girl, who looked purple all over from cold, whose eyes were red from crying, and one of whose hands was frightfully swollen, — "I perceived this little one, sitting on your step, weeping bitterly. I tied my horse to a tree, crossed the street, and, seeing the child's hand thus disfigured, thought it best to bring her up here, as perhaps Dr. Perclass could do something for it."

"I am very glad, Mr. Arnold, that you have done so," said Willma, and her features lit up with pleasure. "Will you please ring the bell, just behind you? Catherina,"—to the servant who entered,—"go to my father and say that I beg him to step over here at once. Then go to the pantry and bring some of the largest cakes to this little sufferer, and—listen—see whether you can find some warm old clothing upstairs. Poor little soul!" she said to the child, "you are quite cold, come up to the stove. Sit in this warm chair and get thawed a little. Who hurt you?"

"A naughty boy threw a stone at me," was the sobbing answer.

"Naughty boy! Never mind, here is a cake," as Catherina entered the room, "and here is some one who will make you well again," Wilma said, seeing her father come in.

"Ah, Mr. Arnold," said Dr. Perclass; "what brings you here? Not ill, I hope?"

"Not I; but this little girl whom I found sitting on your steps, crying bitterly."

"Catherina, bring water," the doctor ordered at once. "It is nothing serious; and also some old linen," he went on, after having examined the hand. "Here is something that will soothe the pain;" pouring some cooling liquid over the swollen hand, and tying it up. "It must be kept bandaged for a few days, and then all will be right again. To whom does the child belong?"

"It is one of the children of Margaretha, the washerwoman," said Bertha. "She lives down in the Zwinger. I shall take her home when I leave this."

"I should like to offer my service," said Mr. Arnold; "but my horse is waiting, and pawing impatiently."

"We can bring the child home very well," said Willma.

"This is unnecessary," remarked Dr. Perclass; "wrap her up warmly, give her a few more cakes, and Catherina can carry her home. Miss Bauer, please inform her where the child's mother lives." Then he retired, and the three young people were left to themselves.

Mr. Arnold made use of the few moments, and said to Willma, "The young gentlemen of the club were speaking last night of a sleighing party, for next Sunday afternoon. If it takes place, which will be decided this evening, may I have the pleasure of giving you a seat in my sleigh?"

"I shall be very happy to accept your invitation, if my father gives his permission."

"Then I shall call on Sunday morning at eleven, after church, to ask his consent. I wish you good-day;" and, with one fond look at her, he left the room.

For the world, Willma could not have lifted her eyes, as he said "good-by." She knew he was waiting for one look; but she felt also that he would read in hers the deep, fervent love which filled her whole heart, and the joy and happiness she wanted to hide from him, as long as he had not told her of his own feelings.

She was awakened from her thoughts by a soft "Good-by," whispered in her ears, and a "By chance, Willma, by chance!" She heard the door shut, and knew she was alone, and that Bertha guessed all.

CHAPTER XI.

AT THE CLUB.

THE room at the club-house, especially set apart for the use of the younger members, was filling fast. Smartly dressed waiting-maids, with white aprons and gay ribbons, were tripping busily about, rinsing glasses, filling them with the foaming beverage from the freshly tapped casks, and distributing them amongst the guests whose names were engraved upon the metal lids of each glass; clouds of smoke, issuing from the different pipes and cigars, wrapping the company in a veil of gray, and making them almost invisible, filled the room. There was gen-

eral talking, until at last Edward Arnold, the president of the party, seated himself in his chair, and began to address them as follows : —

"Gentlemen, the weather being admirably suited for a sleighing party, we have agreed that one should take place to-morrow afternoon. We have met this evening to arrange this matter, and I propose that each of us shall give his name, and that of the lady he intends inviting to accompany him. I, for one, shall of course take Miss Gärtner."

Having written this down, he said, "Augustus, do you mean to invite any one?"

"I shall take Miss Perclass."

"The devil you will!" muttered Edward, angrily, and almost unable to control his temper; however, he succeeded so far, as to be able to say aloud : —

"All right, brother. You, Max Weber?"

"Miss Ziegler."

"I thought so," said the president, laughingly; "most faithful swain. Carl Fisher?"

"Miss Bauer."

"Ah, we take to the fence in order to be near the garden? Wise fellow!"

Thus he went on from one to the other, until only two more were left.

"Now, Herbert, whom do you invite?"

"I know no one for whom I care to throw away my money," was the gruff reply.

"What, sulky? That means that some one has been before you, and that the grapes are sour. Never mind, old fellow. It is an excellent school for being taught resignation. And you, Becher."

"Cannot afford it."

"A most satisfactory reason this. You two, nevertheless, can be of use, if you like. We want two to ride to-morrow to Uhlbach, to order a good dinner to be ready when we arrive, and also some one to go to the authorities of the town to arrange with them about the music and the dancing; it being Sunday, you

know, both are not allowed, but offering some money to the mayor, and so forth, will get us the permission. What do you say as to undertaking this task?"

"We are willing," answered both.

"Well, then, you have to get your horses and leave this about ten o'clock in the morning. This settled, we proceed to the invitations. You gentlemen go after church to the different houses, invite the ladies, get the consent of the parents; then look sharp about as to your sleighs and horses, to be ready by one o'clock to fetch the ladies from their homes, not failing to be by two at the starting-place, from which we proceed; the sleigh with the music at the head, to drive around the Graben, then through Katherina Street, and last through Williams Street, thence leaving the city to go to Uhlbach. We are exactly thirty pairs, that is, thirty sleighs, — a beautiful procession, which will open all the windows, especially when they hear the music. This, then, is all arranged, and nothing remains for me but to go this evening to Keller to engage his band. Therefore, good night, gentlemen. Lena, one more glass, and then farewell until to-morrow, — to your bright eyes and tempting lips."

"Do not waste your sweet words upon me; give them to Miss Gärtner," answered the girl, pertly. "If she knew of all your doings!"

"Much better as it is, my dear, much better;" and, chucking the girl under her chin, he left the room, accompanied by his brother.

They had hardly reached the street when Edward burst forth: "Are you made to proclaim your attachment to Miss Perclass?"

"I do not see it in this light, brother," answered Augustus, quietly. "Have not all the other gentlemen invited ladies for to-morrow, and does every one of them mean something serious? Some of them cannot even think of marrying. Why should they think that I have some particular reason for inviting her?"

"But you are differently situated. I do not exactly mean what *people* would say or think; but our mother will surely hear of it; for she will ask you, and what will you answer her?"

"The truth."

"She has especially told you not to pay too much attention to Miss Perclass."

"Then I shall tell her, that, in this case, unless she gives me sufficient reason for her prejudices, I must act as I think best, and as my heart tells me."

"Pshaw, Augustus, you know you will only set her against you, and as for your heart speaking and all that, why, she thinks this sheer nonsense."

"I am sorry to believe so too, but still I am determined to do as I say."

"Then you have a great deal more courage than I have. What do you mean, — do you intend to propose to Miss Perclass to-morrow?"

"I do not know what I may do; still I have, as yet, no mind to tell her of my feelings, for this state of uncertainty is to me too delicious for me to break it, perhaps, by being refused. Now I can speak to her, and give her to understand by my looks and manner how much I love her; but once refused I lose this right."

"This is mock modesty. You must be sure that she loves you in return?"

"Why should I? Such great happiness, — the thought alone makes me weak as a child! Surely it is too much to expect."

"You make me ashamed of you, Augustus. However, have your own way. Mind, this is the last time I shall warn you." With these words he left him to his thoughts, while he went to Mr. Keller to engage his band; muttering to himself while he was walking along: "Then he has not yet spoken to her; this is all I wanted to find out, neither will he to-morrow. He is too chicken-hearted, and he shall never propose if I can help it!"

CHAPTER XII.

PLEADING FOR HIS RIGHT.

THE sleighing party ended satisfactorily to all, especially to Willma and Augustus, who, happy in each other's society, wanted nothing more. Every look, every action, showed how dear they were each to each; it needed no words to express their mutual love.

On Monday morning, when mother and sons were assembled at the breakfast-table, Mrs. Arnold, turning to Augustus, said, "You were enjoying yourself yesterday, I suppose? As you did not dine here, I had no chance to ask you whether you went alone, or whether you had invited a lady to bear you company at the sleighing party?"

Augustus' heart began to beat, for he knew that now the combat was unavoidable, so he nerved himself, and said, quietly, "I enjoyed myself very much, as I had a lady in my sleigh."

"Do I know her?"

"I do not think that you ever saw her."

"Indeed! What is her name? Is that also unknown to me?"

"No. I think you have heard Miss Perclass' name mentioned before."

He was looking straight into his mother's eyes, and saw there an expression, when he pronounced that name, so entirely discouraging to his faint hopes, that his heart sank to the lowest.

"Did I understand you right? You invited Miss Perclass?"

"Perfectly correct, mother, — that was the lady."

"Did you remember what I told you on the evening of the first ball?" asked the old lady, sternly.

"I have not forgotten it."

"And still you persisted in acting directly against my so plainly expressed wishes?"

"Will you not allow me, mother, to put the case in a different light? Will you let me tell you the view I take?"

"Go on, I shall listen; but do not think to move me by one of

your sentimental speeches, or make me waver one hair's breadth from my resolution. My money shall be divided equally among you two, only if you marry according to my wishes."

"You have a right to do with your money, mother, what you like, but will you not consider first, how unusual it is in this country for parents to make a will at all; and, if they do, that it always denotes that the disinherited child may be supposed to have done some disgraceful deed to drive a father or a mother so far? What have I done to deserve to be so severely treated? Nothing. I only desire to choose a wife after my own heart and to my own liking. Is this dreadful and unnatural? Have I not even the right, that the most common laborer has, to try to secure my own happiness after my own way? Surely, mother, you could not be so unjust as to forbid this?"

"Have I not given you a very good reason *why* I disapprove of Miss Perclass as your wife?" Mrs. Arnold replied, angrily.

"You have given me a reason that suffices *you*, but not *me*. In fact, I do not consider it a reason at all. The lady's character itself is so beyond all doubt, her qualities are of such superior order, that nobody could dare to say anything against her. This satisfies *me*, but to please you, mother, I go farther, and refer to Dr. Perclass himself. There, again, nothing unfavorable can be said. On the contrary, he is not only highly esteemed as an eminent physician, but also loved and respected, by high and low, as a good citizen."

"But his parents and brothers?"

"Mother, this is absurd. What have we to do with his parents, — who are dead long ago, — and his brothers, — all honorable men, who would be ashamed to do a mean deed, — one a farmer, another a school-master in a village, and the third, mayor of a small place, it is true; but has not wise old Diogenes said that he would rather be *the first in a village than the last in a city?*"

"My son, have you no particle of pride left in you? Will you not remember his low parentage?"

"Why, if you want to have it so," cried Augustus, roused at last by his mother's obstinacy, — "why should this lower Dr.

Perclass? Who is more to be admired and esteemed,—he who, having to battle with difficulties, rises by his energy and industry, by his intellect and perseverance, and climbs the ladder of society until he has reached the highest step, where his example fires others to overcome the obstacles which birth has thrown in their way, and to conquer likewise; or he who, simply by the accident of nature, is born noble and rich, and without being obliged to use the great gifts which Providence may have given him, takes easily, and without one struggle, all the advantages this accident has provided for him? Mother, your good sense must show you who is right and who is wrong in this argument.”

For answer the lady held up her hands in horror, and cried shame at his vulgar and disgraceful opinions. But Augustus heeded it not, and went on.

“Mother, having now come thus far, let me plead a little farther. I want to speak to you as a child to a mother, whose greatest grief it is to seem to disobey and to displease her. You have only us two. One of us has acted entirely to your satisfaction, and, I hope, also, to his own. The second, it seems, has to act against your pleasure, or give up the thought of his future happiness, drive away the pictures of joy which have been sunshine to his soul, and the realization of which would have made this world a paradise to him. Mother, dear,”—taking her hand fondly, and looking pleadingly into her eyes,—“do you wish me to give up my dearest hopes? Can you, as my mother, will it so? Speak, dearest—”

“No more at present, no more,” she said, rising quickly. “You shall hear my decision in an hour hence.”

She left the room hastily, and the two brothers were left alone.

Scarcely had she gone, when Edward, who had during the whole conversation taken refuge behind a newspaper, burst forth:—

“By Jupiter, Augustus, you *have* tackled the old lady. I do not think that she was ever spoken to like this before. You have moved her, too, but you will not conquer her.”

Augustus did not answer. He had laid his head on his arms, waiting with beating heart until he should be summoned.

CHAPTER XIII.

RECOLLECTIONS OF PAST DAYS.

"YOUR mother wants to speak to you in her room, sir," was the message a servant delivered to Augustus after the lapse of an hour. He had to steady himself when he got up, before he was able to leave his place. With slow steps he entered his mother's apartment, and, without a word, went up to her. She had looked around when he came in, but then turned her face towards the window at which she was seated, so that he could not see it. Stopping before her, she held out her hand to him, still keeping her head averted, and said, in a low voice, "I consent."

Augustus was overpowered by emotion. Taking her hand tenderly, and pressing his lips repeatedly to it, he said, fervently, with a deep, trembling voice, "Thank you, mother, dearest mother."

"I wish you all happiness, my son. You can never know how much this has cost me. Never!" she repeated, almost unconsciously. "Now leave me; I wish to be alone."

Seeing that his mother was deeply affected, and, knowing that she disliked to have her emotion observed, he obeyed in silence.

Going back to the room where he had left his brother, he was received with:—

"You do not look as if you had conquered?"

"My mother consents, freely," was the short reply.

"By Jove, you are a lucky fellow! But why have you such a long face?"

"My happiness is too deep for outward show."

"And now you will be in a hurry to make sure of her love by proposing at once?"

Augustus looked up as one awakening from a deep sleep. "Yes," he said, slowly, "I think so."

"Will it be to-day or to-morrow?" inquired Edward, with forced gayety.

"Not to-day."

"You do not seem to be in a hurry?"

"We understand each other without words."

Now let us go back and discover what had so strangely changed Mrs. Arnold. Augustus had touched her to the heart. She could not deny that his was the best of the argument, although his sentiments sounded new, bold, and strange to her. Nobody ever before had dared so to speak to her; but she had to confess that Augustus, during the whole interview, had conducted himself not only like a gentleman, but also deferentially and respectfully as became a son. He had fought for his opinion, and for his love, manfully, acknowledging that to displease her would be a sore grief to him. She could not help respecting him, although the battle was against her. By the time she had reached her room and seated herself at her desk, her feelings had undergone a complete revolution, and all was in favor of her son's suit. Still her pride was not quite conquered. Almost unconsciously she had placed her finger on a hidden spring in her desk, pressed it, and a secret drawer sprang forward on her touch. Her thoughts wandered far back to the past, when she, too, was young, had loved, had been wooed and won by an honorable man, whose love she had lost only by her own folly. That one thoughtless act had blighted all her life, and remorse had made of her the cold, proud woman she was now. All this passed before her mind's eye while sitting there, and her stern features began to work, and a tear trickled slowly over her wrinkled cheek, now worn by age and furrowed by emotion. She put her hand into the drawer and drew forth a picture of a gentleman in his prime, set in a simple frame of mother-of-pearl; also, two letters, yellow from age, whose ink was so pale as to make it difficult to decipher the words. One letter was in a female hand, addressed, "To my dearest Wilhelm," and signed, "Your loving Elizabeth," containing a request, almost a condition, to their prospective union. The other, in the handwriting of a gentleman, and addressed to "Miss Elizabeth Gärtner," signed "Wilhelm Perclass." It was the answer to the first letter, and ran as follows:—

"It is useless to describe my feelings after having mastered the contents of your letter, in which you wish me to disown my poor, but honest and respected, parents. It is enough to say that I should never be able to hold up my head as an honorable man, were I to do such a mean and cowardly act. Further have I to mention that, although loving you even yet, I never could honor a woman, as I should wish to honor and respect my wife, knowing that her pride had made her forget that she ought to have a heart. Therefore I have to submit to the sorrow which Providence has seen fit to lay upon me, and try to tear out of my heart the love which I deeply and truly feel for you."

After having read over the letters, she took up the likeness and looked at it long and tenderly. "No, she said, "you will never consent to their union; you will conclude that the son is like the mother. *I* try to atone for my wrong; but *you*, — will *you* forgive and forget?" The full, intelligent brown eye of the picture seemed to smile at her, as if assuring her of his forgiveness; but the firm mouth with its expression of determination seemed to refuse. The noble, high, broad forehead gave signs of pride, too; but pride of a higher order than rank, station, or wealth. "What evil spirit made me ever write that letter?" mused the old lady, still looking earnestly at the handsome, manly face. "It was not want of heart. No, Wilhelm, you were wrong there. It was more to test the power I had over you. But the past is passed. I will atone, Wilhelm, I will." So saying, she put all back into the drawer, which shut with a click, and rang the bell to have her son called.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIRST OF MAY.

THERE was nothing now to prevent Augustus from declaring his feelings openly to Miss Perclass, as the rock which kept

him from his happiness was now removed from his path. Still, week after week slipped on, and he had not yet ascertained what he might expect from his future. A dread of some unknown trouble held him back, and he lingered to obtain assurance that his love was returned.

This way he lived on until spring, when the newspapers announced that, the weather permitting, on the first of May all the public gardens would be opened and bands of music playing. This he thought would be a good opportunity to meet Willma, and to venture to risk the question. There, under the influences of mirth and music, while walking with him under the trees of the broad avenues, under the blue heavens, with the bright sun above them, should she answer him, and tell him — that she would be his. In her beautiful, honest eyes, looking straight into his, he would then read her love, while her truthful lips should confirm the assurance of his happiness. After having so resolved, he felt easier and less sad than for some weeks. He breathed freer, and pictures of a bright future, with Willma at his side, occupied his thoughts and filled his heart with joy.

The last April day came, and he changed his mind again. He would know, by the first of May, what was in store for him, and therefore, as he could not see her before that day, would write to her, telling her of his love and asking her to become his wife. He wrote the letter, got a lovely bouquet to send with it, begging her to carry it in her hand next day as a sign for him that his suit was accepted; should she omit to do so, it would save him the pain of hearing from her own lips the death of all his brightest and fondest hopes.

He called a boy whom he saw passing on the road, asked him whether he knew the house of Dr. Perclass, gave him, after he had answered "I think I do," the letter with the flowers, and, having pressed some money into his hand, told him to be sure to give them to Miss Perclass herself. After repeating his orders again, to make sure that the lad had rightly understood him, he let him go, watching him as he ran quickly down the road.

May-day broke bright and lovely upon the expecting world of Moosdorf, and Augustus, looking out of his window, took it for a good omen. In the afternoon he went with his brother and Miss Gärtner to one of the gardens. His heart beat high with fear and hope. They entered the gate, passed through one or two avenues, to seek a suitable table, when they unexpectedly came upon Dr. Perclass, who, with his daughter by his side, was also looking for a proper place. They saluted each other, exchanged a few friendly words, and were at the point of passing on, when Dr. Perclass saw Augustus suddenly grow deadly pale, while pressing his hand to his side, trying to gain the support of a tree close by. He staggered, and would have fallen, had not the doctor caught him in his arms. Willma gave a faint cry, and hurried nearer; but her father held her back, asking a waitress, who just then happened to pass by, to bring a glass of water. His wish having been complied with, he made Augustus swallow the liquid, after which he gradually revived.

"You must excuse me for thus upsetting you all," he said, after a pause, and trying to smile. "I feel better and shall be able to go home now. I anticipated so much pleasure from this afternoon, but"—he was unable to finish. One long, sad, yearning look at the face he loved best on earth, and then, bowing, he turned to leave the garden.

"Shall I not go home with you, brother? I can leave Marie in the charge of the doctor until I come back."

"No, thank you, I can go home alone."

"Keep yourself quiet for the day, and you will be all right by to-morrow."

No answer came back to show that he had heard Dr. Perclass' advice.

"Has he these attacks often?" asked the doctor of Edward.

"I never saw him this way," was the answer.

"He does not look very strong," remarked the former again.

"Do you think so?" asked Edward, anxiously.

"No, he does not look as if he could bear many shocks."

Augustus staggered on like one drunk, until he reached his

home. His mother met him in the passage, and, surprised at his coming back so soon and looking so ill, asked him what was the matter; but he passed her like one dreaming, entered his room, locked the door, and threw himself on a sofa, groaning like one in pain. "Lost, lost!" he cried, at last. "My brightest, my most cherished hopes shivered, — dashed to the ground. I know now, why I hesitated, from day to day, to put the question. She loves me not, she cares not for me, and rejects my honest affections." Then he sprang up, rang the bell violently, and gave orders to have his horse saddled, and wine brought in. He hastily drank some, descended the stairs, and rode off; he did not care whither, — anywhere, so as to be alone with his thoughts.

On meeting Willma in the garden, Augustus expected to see the bouquet in her hand. It was not there; and it was then that he felt that frightful pain, and all grew dark and dizzy before his eyes; for he knew that he was refused. He had not lifted his eyes to her face, and therefore did not see the joyous look that flashed across it on seeing him, nor the beaming smile that was playing around her lips to welcome him. After he had left the garden, the day had lost its charms for her; the brightness had flown from it, and the lively music seemed to be mocking her in her disappointment. The sad, yearning eyes of Augustus were ever before her, and she could hardly keep back her tears. Her father noticed her sadness, and, attributing it to the illness of Mr. Arnold, said, "He will be all right to-morrow." They went home sooner than usual, and thus the day, commenced by both with such pleasant feelings, ended with bringing sorrow and anxiety to loving hearts.

Two days passed, and Willma had not seen Augustus. He had not ridden past the house as usual, and she began to fear that his attack might have had serious consequences. The third day she ventured to ask her father whether he had heard anything of Mr. Arnold. "He is quite well again," was the answer, "for I saw him yesterday."

"You have seen him, papa?"

"Yes, riding down the road. He saluted me, stopped his

horse and told me that he had recovered. He did not look well, though."

Willma turned away in silence. A wild fear had taken possession of her heart, and a tear, hot and burning, fell from her eye. Thus several days passed. He never came. A deep despair had come upon her; she neglected her music, and her poor flowers hung their heads, for she forgot to water them. A concert took place at the club-house, and she persuaded her father to go there, hoping she might meet Augustus, and discover the clue to his conduct. She saw him there; he only bowed and passed her. A hot flush of mortification spread over her face, and tears of humiliation sprang into her eyes. She saw it all now: he had trifled with her until he was sure of having won her affection, and then, — had thrown her off. "Cruel, cruel!" she murmured to herself; "but pride shall help me now. He is not worth a triumph. I shall carry my head high, and smiles shall hide the sufferings of my heart." Then silvery was her laughter and sparkling her eyes when, after the performance was over, Augustus noticed her speaking to some of her friends while passing him in the hall.

Several weeks elapsed, and pride had well sustained her in the battle. Neither look nor feature had shown Augustus, at their casual meetings, that her heart was his. Polite bows, a few formal words when necessary, were all they exchanged in public. Willma could bear it no longer; she must have rest. She therefore asked her father to let her go on a visit to her sister Thusnelda; to which he readily consented, for he had noticed her feverish excitement of late, and thought that change would benefit her.

People, as Bertha told her friend, had begun to remark that Augustus Arnold had ceased to pay attention to Miss Perclass. Some said that he had trifled with her, and thought him a villain. Others, again, insisted that she had refused him, and called her a coquette. So, taking all in all, Willma was glad to leave home for a short time.

Mrs. Arnold had referred to Miss Perclass only once, asking her son, whether all would soon be settled; but he only re-

quested her never to speak of that matter again, and, seeing the pain she had inflicted by her question, said sadly, "My poor boy, I knew it would be so," and abstained from ever mentioning the subject again.

Summer passed into September. Great preparations for Edward's wedding were made. The day had drawn near, and at last the young pair had been made husband and wife, and gone on a wedding tour to Switzerland, not to return before October. Augustus and his mother were now left alone, each having their thoughts to brood over. He had often been ill lately, and his uncle, Dr. Gärtner, had repeatedly advised him to travel for a little while; but he obstinately refused to listen to such counsel, and never left his home.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

SYLVESTER-EVE.

THERE was a rumor at Moosdorf that Mr. Meisner, the highly esteemed and honored director and founder of the Ladies' Institute, was going to remove to another city. It was said that many candidates had answered the advertisements for a new director, but that, after long consultation of the committee, a selection, at last, had been made,—a clergyman, who came highly recommended as a man of great talent, and provided with excellent testimonials from the professors of the university at which he had graduated. It was farther affirmed that he had been, for more than two years, vicar of an obscure village. He was now daily expected at Moosdorf.

It was Sylvester-eve. The day was cold and stormy. The snow fell in thick, large flakes, quickly covering the ground.

The storm howled through the streets, making doors and windows shake in their frames. Neither wind nor snow could, on that evening, keep the gentlemen from their club, unless some urgent business called them elsewhere. Nor were the young ladies less courageous; for nothing could have prevented them from going to see their friends, and spending the evening, either in having their fortune told with cards, or by looking into muddy water, or throwing the white of an egg into a tumblerful of water, telling, by the shape it assumed, what fortune or misfortune the future was to bring them; or, best and most relied on of all, by melting lead and throwing it into cold water, watching it harden, and twist, and form into all kinds of fantastic figures, by which they then ascertained the occupation of their future husbands. Willma Perclass, who had come back from her visit to her sister only a week before, also had her friends with her, and they were already deeply engaged in important preparations for that evening's amusements. Lead, eggs, tumblers, water, cards, and so forth, were ready,—the young ladies standing about, talking in high excitement. Fruit and cakes had been placed on a side-table, with several pitchers of cider, just then beginning to ripen, at which time it was considered most delicious. About ten o'clock, when all had got sufficiently or insufficiently enlightened about their future fate, dancing began, songs were sung in turn, games were played until past eleven o'clock; then the most important and exciting moment drew near. "Where have you put the looking-glass?" Willma was asked from all sides. "We hope it is in a very frightful place!"

"I know you will be satisfied," answered Willma, with a most mysterious mien. "You know, down in the front hall, that large, broad cellar-door? Well, after opening that, and stepping down just two steps of the stone stairs, there is a narrow, little door in the wall; that door I got opened to-day, had the dark closet swept out, and, on its back wall, is hung the looking-glass. Fastened to each side is a candlestick."

"Excellent!" "Won't it be very impressive?" and such like exclamations, followed this explanation.

"Now, let us get ready. We are seven girls, — a holy number into the bargain. Let us see, who comes first? Let Willma be first. She to go in, we after her, placing ourselves on one side of the wall."

"Very well, if you wish, be it so; I shall look in first. It wants five minutes to twelve. Let us go downstairs. Give me a lighted candle that we may see the way."

"How the storm whistles!" said Bertha, after having reached the hall. "Let us bolt the front door."

"No, Bertha, you must not do so. You know that my father is at the club-house, and we might forget to unlock it again, and he would be unable to make himself heard, with us noisy young people upstairs, and the wind blowing outside. There is no danger; the door is well shut. Come on."

Just on the stroke of twelve Willma lit the candles near the mirror, and her friends stood in a row along the wall. The storm roared outside the house, shaking the strong door, making it creak in its hinges, as if furious at the resistance, — a fitting night for mysterious goings-on like that in the closet, indeed! Willma's face looked as white as marble. Her dark eyes gleamed and sparkled in the light, as if her mind were greatly agitated. She hesitated to approach the glass. The others urged her, saying that they also wanted to try. She raised her head quickly, and looked straight and firmly into the glass. Why did her eyes dilate so widely, and her breast heave as if in fright? She raised her finger and pointed towards the glass, her gaze still fixed upon it, staring, as if fascinated by terror. The others also looked, and dimly saw, — the head of a man! His pale face was framed into a large, black beard. The dark eyes seemed to look wonderingly into theirs, and the dark hair was covered by a large slouched hat. At last they heard a voice behind them saying, "I see the ladies of this city keep Sylvester-eve." They turned around, and before them stood a gentleman wholly strange to them. He had drawn back into the hall in the mean time, and they followed him.

"First let me apologize," he said, with a polite bow, and smiling at their consternation, "for my untimely intrusion; but,

arriving this night by the diligence, and being a stranger in this city, I asked one of the clerks at the post-office for some hotel, telling him that I was the future Director of the Institute, and wished to see Dr. Perclass very early to-morrow. He told me that, at this time of the evening, I would almost certainly find him at the club-house, and described the way to it. Either through my own stupidity, or some other cause, I missed my way; but, passing this house, and seeing the door wide open, and a ray of light shining in the hall, I took it to be a hotel and entered. Thus it happened, ladies, that I was so unfortunate as to disturb you. I have now nothing else left, but again to beg for your forgiveness, and to recommence my wanderings."

"This *is* Dr. Perclass' house," said Willma, stepping forward, "and I am his daughter. The wind must have forced the door open; but we thought it securely fastened. As for your apology, it is freely accepted. I regret that you got such a cold reception in the city which you intend to make your home. However, you will find it very pleasant here, after a little while, for we are hospitable people."

"I have no doubt of being charmed with the place if Miss Perclass condescends to permit me to count her amongst my friends. I wish you now good-night. I shall have the pleasure to wait upon your honored father to-morrow."

"If you do not mind going back the way you came from," said Willma again, "and will walk a little farther on, you will reach the club-house, which is brightly lit up to-night."

"Thank you. Good-night."

"Good-night," she said, shutting the door after her.

"You are sure to marry him, Willma," cried all. "Did you ever see anything so extraordinary?"

"Nonsense! Very likely he is already provided for."

"It is time to go home now," said Bertha; "our servants are waiting in your kitchen, and may grumble if we keep them from their beds much longer."

Caps were put on, cloaks and shawls brought forward, and soon the merry party left the house.

Willma went to her room, and, sitting at the foot of her bed,

laid her head wearily upon the edge of it, sighing deeply. "Marry? I marry? with no heart to give," she said sadly to herself; "yet I think it has to come to that, or else he might think I am still waiting for him." She sat thus still for some time, until at last her eyes began to fill, and large tears chased each other down her cheeks. "I wonder where he is now," she murmured. "Does he ever think of me?"

The wound was not healed yet, and was paining still, although no outward sign showed how desolate and blighted her life was.

CHAPTER II.

TEMPTATION.

NEXT day, Mr. Horst, the new director, called on Dr. Perclass. They were a long time closeted together, and, after they had done with business, Dr. Perclass took the stranger to the sitting-room to introduce him to his daughter. "Willma, this is Mr. Horst, our new director. I understand, however, that you have met before, and, I believe, not under very dignified circumstances."

Both smiled at the allusion to the previous evening's meeting, and Willma said, "I hope Mr. Horst will not think the worse of us for having allowed him to surprise us at such harmless amusements?"

"Certainly not," he said. "I was only sorry at having interrupted your pleasure. May I ask whether the oracle has given satisfaction to you all?"

"This is just the point about which you have yet to be forgiven," replied Willma, laughingly. "Your arrival broke the spell, and when you left, the hour for consultation had passed, and as I was the first who had to ask the glass, the others had their pleasant anticipation baffled."

"Will you kindly undertake to make preliminary peace with your friends for me until I have the opportunity of doing so personally?"

"With great pleasure, Mr. Horst, and I dare say your crime will be forgiven."

"I should be most unfortunate if it were not," he answered, with mock gravity. "I see you are a musician, Miss Perclass?" he added after a while, looking towards the piano.

"Yes, I play occasionally, though of late I have neglected my practice;" and a sigh, accompanied by a deep sadness that passed quickly over her face, was wrung from her heart. "You sing, Mr. Horst, do you not?"

"Yes, I sing."

"Tenor?"

"Yes. What makes you think so?"

"I judge so from your speaking voice. This is very pleasant news. You must not omit to join our 'Sing Verein,' and you must do so immediately, for we are now practising 'Haydn's Creation,' and are greatly in need of somebody to take the solo part. You will sing it, will you not?"

"Who tells you that I can do justice to it?"

"We can try at once," was the prompt answer; and, opening the piano, she gave him the music, saying, "Will you oblige me by singing?"

"There is no resisting you," he said, half amused, half astonished at the decisive manner with which she settled the question.

"Well, then, begin;" and without another word, she struck the chords and commenced playing. He sang, and that with such a beautiful, decided tenor that she was charmed by it. His voice was sweet and tender, exquisitely soft and mellow, as if his throat were lined with velvet, and then, again, so round and full, so highly cultivated, that, after he had finished, Willma silently shut up the instrument, and looking dreamingly, as if still listening to the beautiful sounds, said, "Mr. Roth, our director, will congratulate himself, if you join our 'Verein,' and we all will thank you also for gratifying us." The sound of her voice was so true and her face expressed such undisguised approbation

that Mr. Horst blushed like a boy at the praise, and could answer only by a bow.

He was certainly a very handsome man, as he thus stood before her with the flush dying away from his delicate features, leaving them pale as marble, his winning eyes and wavy dark hair, his small, slight figure, with the elegant grace of good-breeding, and Willma could not help thinking so, still under the influence his beautiful voice had thrown over her. She did not notice a great drawback which one of his features had, and which was expressed about his mouth, — that feature which gives even more expression to the face than the eyes, — great weakness of character. There was nothing bad in him, only he was weak, and it would be hard for him to resist temptation.

What did he think of her, after he had said good-by, and her father had promised to introduce him to Mr. Roth? On reaching his room, he sat down near a table, and, supporting his head with his hands, remained thus a long while, lost in thoughts. At last he said, "She is beautiful, wonderfully beautiful. I never have seen a face that charms and fascinates so entirely. What if I should try to win her? This alliance would give me position, wealth, and a beautiful wife, — three things much thought of in this world, but" — and a flush of annoyance passed over his face, as a small medallion, plainly set in gold, fell on the table. It was the picture of a girl of about seventeen years of age, frank, loving, and innocent. The childish brown eyes looked smilingly underneath a shower of long brown curls, and the small red lips seemed to be pouting at his thoughts. He took it up, gazed long and earnestly at it, and, pressing it to his lips, put it back from where it had fallen, saying, tenderly, "Louise, Louise! sweet country flower, I will be faithful to you." Then he got up and began to write rapidly.

Mr. Horst soon joined the "Sing Verein," and also became a member of the club. There were now enough opportunities offered to him to get closer acquainted with Willma, if he wished. He saw her often at her own home, for in affairs of the Institute it was necessary for him to call on her father, but seldom finding him at home, found it pleasant to spend half an

hour or so with his daughter, and as they had one interest in common, — that means, as they both belonged to the "Verein," it was only natural that they should talk over this and that piece, about one solo part and the other; or, as they both understood music well, and were passionately fond of it, it was a matter of course that they should tell each other so, and sing songs together, or lend newly published pieces to each other. Had any other young gentleman gone to Dr. Perclass' so often, it would have been commented on, but with Mr. Horst it was a different thing; either it was not noticed, or if any wise head thought about it at all, and suspected that the doctor might not always be at home, yet the new director was so fast becoming a general favorite, that many said they would not spoil his luck, for it would be an excellent thing for him if he should succeed in winning Miss Perclass.

Time passed on. Mr. Horst met Willma regularly at the "Verein," and almost always at the entertainment given by the club, for she frequented them constantly, being sure there to get a glance at the face that was, and always would be, dearest to her on earth. How pale and thin that face began to look, and how those sad eyes haunted her after these occasions no one could tell, for, no matter how he might have treated her, she had given him her whole heart, and could not take it back; and for those attentions she received, which gave Augustus so many a pang, and which he watched and made conclusions on with the jealousy of love, she hardly perceived them, and, if she did, attributed them partly to what a lady might expect from a gentleman, and partly to Mr. Horst being so well acquainted with her father. She derived pleasure from his society, and enjoyed his company and his fine singing, but not more so than she would have been pleased by the association of any other well-bred, accomplished gentleman. Augustus, however, took a different view of what he saw or he believed he saw, and became convinced more and more that Mr. Horst was the man whom Willma would love by and by, if she did not already, and that the director would separate him from his love forever and ever. These thoughts and his delicate health made life dreary to him; and although he was urgently recommended to try change of air, and he knew

that he ought to do so, and fly from the tortures he had to sustain by his observations on Mr. Horst's progress in favor with Willma, he still persistently refused to listen to reason, thus aggravating his illness, which reduced his strength and made recovery difficult.

What were Mr. Horst's thoughts and wishes all this time? Perhaps he could not have answered this question very readily, for in the presence of Miss Perclass he saw, heard, and thought of nothing but her. Her beauty charmed him, her manners bewitched him, and her conversation wove a spell around him, which he did not desire, even if he had had the power, to break. Leaving her, he would go home and dream of her until there rose into his mind a pair of brown and innocent eyes, casting (so it seemed to him) reproachful, questioning looks at him; then he would rouse himself, call himself cold-blooded and treacherous for forgetting one moment his sweet country flower, and, taking out the little picture, would look at it tenderly, kiss the pouting mouth until the trusting young face seemed to smile forgiveness, and then taking pen and ink would write rapidly, as if afraid that temptation again might master him. Those were almost the daily struggles he had to go through, for he still loved his absent little Louise, only the temptations were so great.

CHAPTER III.

LOUISE.

AN honest, hard-working couple lived at the place where Mr. Horst had been vicar before coming to Moosdorf. They had an only child, the pride and joy of their age. Louise was a good girl, repaying her parents' love with fond affection. She milked the only cow they had, she brought the water from the well, and helped in all household matters to her utmost ability. She

could bake bread, and her brown little fingers could turn the spindle as cleverly as any one in the village. Every one loved her for her sweetness of temper and her innocent, gentle ways. She had grown up to be a very pretty girl, and was generally called the flower of the village. When she was between sixteen and seventeen years of age Mr. Horst came to the place as vicar. The first time he noticed Louise was in church on Sunday, and the innocent child-face, which with its clear eyes looked so faithfully up to him and listened so devoutly to his sermon, attracted his attention. He met her again, in the fields; she wore a wreath of wild flowers on her curly head, and was singing along the road. He saluted her, and remembered long afterwards her shy, modest acknowledgment of his salute. Meeting her again, he accosted her, asked her where she lived and who were her parents. He walked a little with her, and drew her into conversation. Her quaint answers and odd questions amused him, and he became still more interested in her. He visited her parents, and found them to be honest and respectable people who tried to do right and fulfil their duties. So it happened that he met Louise here and there, and soon discovered that she possessed rare qualities of intellect. He resolved to teach her history and geography, beyond simple reading and writing, which she had learned in the village school. He spoke to her parents about it, and they were pleased that their child should become a scholar. Months passed on, and Louise proved to be an apt pupil, learning quickly and comprehending with astonishing rapidity. Besides history and geography she learned more, — they came to love each other, and confessed it. Mr. Horst made her parents acquainted with this their mutual discovery, and told them, that, as soon as he got a parsonage, he would take their daughter home, as his wife. The honest people had no objection to make, and said he need not be in a hurry, for they were glad to have their child a little while longer with them, and besides she was yet very young. So the two lovers were very happy. One day, a travelling artist passed through the village, and the vicar had Louise's picture taken. Then their happiness was suddenly ended, and grief came over them.

The vicar read an advertisement one morning, that a director, recommended by good testimonials, was required for a Ladies' Institute. He resolved to apply for it, but to keep his doing so a secret from Louise until he should know the result. His application was accepted, and joyfully he took the letter to her father's house, to tell her of his good fortune. The good little soul looked on it with different eyes. He might be lucky in having secured this directorship, but they had now to separate. She would be left alone, and he would go to a large city, where beautiful ladies with their fine manners might make him forget his simple country-love. He would not see it in this light, however. It was of course hard that they must part, he said, but then, that would be only for a short time; he would come back and take her home, and then, as his wife, have her always with him. He would perhaps meet with some other ladies; but he could never find one whom he loved so much as his little country flower, who soon then would join him, and meet those dreaded ladies too. She must not neglect her studies, but should be very industrious, and so the time would pass quickly until he would come for her. Thus he tried to console her, until she smiled again; and when, now and then, tears would come in her eyes, she would make an effort to suppress them, thinking of the happy future that was in store for her.

The parting was over, and Louise felt very lonely. She tried her books, but they would not content her; she went the walks they had so often taken together, but *he* was not with her; so she returned home to cry in her little room. Thus a week passed, and a letter, full of love, arrived, describing all that had happened to him, also telling her that he really had met that beautiful lady she was so afraid of, but that she could not drive his little Louise from his heart; that he had her picture with him, and often looked at it, wishing she were with him. This letter brought the light back to her eyes and sunshine into her life again; she would sing from morn till eve, and was as happy as the day was long. Then another and another letter reached her, and so on, each expressing his love and constancy, and always referring to the coming time when she would be his wife. Then the

letters grew shorter, giving as reason his having so much to attend to, and not mentioning a word about their future. This gave poor Louise a sharp pang, for which she began to scold herself the next minute, calling herself selfish and too exacting, but still the dull pain would often return. Another letter came, to receive which made her heart beat with joy, but, when read, would make her sad again, and tears flow from her eyes. At last she did not hear from him for weeks and weeks, and when her heart was heavy with woe, she began to tell herself, that probably he was preparing everything, so as to come for her, or perhaps he was on the road already, while she all the time was thinking so ill of him.

Days passed on. Carl Horst, her lover, came not. Then she ceased to hope, for she felt, that he had — forgotten her.

One day, when she came home from one of her long, dreary walks, a letter lay on the table for her. With a cry of joy she took possession of it and went to her room. All at once her mother heard a cry and a fall; hurrying upstairs, she found her child lying on the floor insensible. After some time Louise opened her eyes slowly, moaned, and shut them again. Having swallowed a draught of water, which her mother brought her, she raised herself, and, seeing the letter lying on the floor, burst into a flood of tears. "Mother, mother," she cried, "he is engaged to another. I have nobody now but you and father; O mother, dear mother!"

The next morning Louise came down in the room where her parents sat; her step was heavy and her eyes had dark rings underneath, as if she had not slept all night. "Louise, dear, how do you feel this morning?" asked her mother. Instead of an answer, the poor sweet mouth began to quiver, and wearily she sat on the bench, silently brushing the tears from her pale cheek. When the parents commenced to abuse him as a villain who had broken their darling's heart, the little hands went up pleadingly, begging them to keep still and not to say one word against Carl. She had thought it over all night, and knew now that it was best so, for she would never have suited the position he would have raised her to; her plain manners would always

have been against her, and at last he would have been ashamed of his country wife. No, it was best as it was, and he knew it too, or else he would never have acted like this. She was not angry with him, oh, no! and she only hoped he might be happy. At present it was of course very hard for her, but, — after a little while, — and her voice grew lower and more mournful, — when she got used to think of him as one belonging to another, she would be all right again. But they must never speak a word against him, for it would pain her.

So her parents refrained from expressing the contempt they felt for him, and mentioned his name no more.

Louise grew thinner and sadder every day. Nobody ever saw her smile again; she did her household duties as before, but in a dreamy way that was heart-breaking to behold. She put the books he had bought her away, and with them tried to put away her love.

CHAPTER IV.

SORE HEARTS.

YES, it was true, that Mr. Horst was engaged to Miss Perclass. He had surprised her, one afternoon, by offering himself to her, and, although she was confused and embarrassed at first, she soon recovered, and answered him, that, if he could obtain her father's consent, she would be his wife.

This state, which is so particularly supposed to bring happiness to those most concerned, proved in this case to be an exception to the rule, for neither Willma nor her betrothed derived much enjoyment from their engagement. One was tortured by the stings of conscience, for having faithlessly deserted a trusting and loving heart; and the other, by feeling indifferent to what the future might bring her. Her mind was occu-

pied with pictures of the past, and regrets for what might have been. Willma had promised to become Mr. Horst's wife, because she had made up her mind that she would marry, if it were only to show Augustus that she was not grieving after him, and, when Mr. Horst proposed, she determined to accept him, as he was in every respect, as far as she knew him, an unobjectionable gentleman. So this hapless couple hastened on their marriage. Willma, because she told herself, that, if she should wait too long, she did not know what she might yet do, and Mr. Horst, hoping, if once the knot were tied, to feel more rest and less remorse. The wedding was to take place on May-day, and the preparation for it occupied much of Willma's time and thoughts.

Augustus had heard of it, and was so violently affected by the news, that he broke a blood-vessel. He was in danger for several days, and then began slowly to recover.

On the wedding-day he insisted on being conveyed to the house of a friend, from which he could see the procession to the church. His friends begged him to desist, and told him it might have the most serious consequences; but all was in vain. He only smiled a sad, mournful smile, and insisted on having his way. At last they gave in. Having reached the house, he sat near a window, from which he could overlook the street and see the church door through which the bridal procession had to pass. There he sat, silently watching, until they came; first, the little children, hand-in-hand, dressed in white, with flowers in their hair, carrying nosegays. Then the bride, leaning on the arm of her future husband, dressed in white satin, with a tiny myrtle wreath in her dark shining hair, and her bridal veil covering almost the whole of her exquisite figure, looking sad and pale, but still lovely, with downcast eyes, her dark long lashes almost resting on her marble cheek. On first seeing her, a scarlet flush had dyed Augustus' pallid features, and after she had passed, when they wanted to ask him whether he felt strong enough to be taken home, they found that he had fainted.

There was little time left for Willma, once married, to brood

over her trouble, for friends began to pour in to visit the young wife, and presents were sent in daily, from those who had not been at her wedding. Those who had not been present had sent them, as is the custom, by their servants to the hotel at which the wedding was held, where the different gifts were distributed during the repast, that is, while the dessert was served up; this contributing greatly to the general enjoyment and amusement of the day, as not only the happy pair thus receive presents, but every guest is also remembered by his absent friends, and as very comical gifts are often sent, *over the table*, as it is called, there is much merriment going on during the dessert.

Weeks had passed on, and Willma had in a measure become contented with her new life. Her husband was attentive, and tried to please her in every way. It was a relief to her that he did not annoy her with caresses or tender words, but was simply courteous and respectful. She never asked herself whether he loved her or not.

One morning, after Mr. Horst had gone to his school duties, and his wife had seated herself near the window, to employ her time with some feminine work, she was interrupted by a knock at the door. Thinking it to be some friend of hers, she called to come in, and was surprised when a man entered, dressed like a laborer. His face was careworn and browned by constant exposure to the sun. He asked after Mr. Horst, and when he was told that he was engaged at present, but might be called if he was wanted particularly, said, "I do wish to see him, for I come with a message from one who is dying." He threw his swarthy hand across his eyes, as if brushing away some tears; then, as if ashamed of showing emotion, he asked abruptly, "You are his wife, I suppose?" After being answered, he said, "And you could have the heart to make him desert her, — my darling, my only child!"

"What do you mean?" questioned Willma, surprised, coming to the conclusion that she had to deal with an insane person.

"What do I mean?" he exclaimed, maddened by her quiet

manner ; "now dare you ask me? — you, who stole him from my child! Had you not enough, with your wealth, beauty, and fine friends, that you need to come between him and my darling, my sweet flower? How can you be happy, while she, the innocent, loving soul, is dying; ay, dying!" he added, fiercely; "because he deserted her, and deceived her trusting, simple heart."

"My good man," Willma at last succeeded in saying, "you must be mistaken. My husband never told me that he loved another; or, surely, I should never have married him. Carl Horst is an honorable man, not capable of doing so mean an action as you would imply."

"What!" cried the infuriated father, "will you deny that he ever was vicar at P., and there met my child, made love to her, and promised to be her husband? Will you deny that he came here to take a directorship, and wrote tender letters to my darling, which at first made her happy and gay as a bird, but later made her cry and grow sad? Have you the face to tell *me*, her father, that she did not get that infernal letter, in which he told her of his engagement? — after the receipt of which she never held up her pretty head again, never smiled, but drooped and faded away, until she could not leave her bed any more, and is now dying, — dying!"

He pronounced the last word with a sob, his tears raining freely down from his eyes.

Willma had, at first, listened in wonder, but as the truth broke upon her, she had sunk down on a chair, covering her face with her hands, and murmured, "And he is my — husband!" Then, hearing the sob of the heart-broken father, she got up quickly, went to him, and, laying her hand gently upon his arm, said, almost choking with emotion, "Poor father! I pity you from the bottom of my heart; but look at me, and say whether I am not innocent of the wrong that has been done. Look in my face, and see whether you cannot believe me, if I repeat, that I never knew of this."

He searched her face long and suspiciously, and at last said, "Lady, I believe you."

"I thank you. My husband must be made acquainted with this at once."

"Of course, for I come on purpose to bring him to my darling's death-bed; for, would you believe it, she wants to see him, and says she cannot die until she has done so. O lady, she is an angel! She never was angry for his deserting her, and earnestly begged us not to say anything against him. She must always love him, she said, and she had forgiven him."

Tears were flowing down Willma's cheeks, when she despatched a servant to her husband to tell him to come up. She found no words with which to console the unhappy father. When Mr. Horst entered the room, he started back in terror, on seeing the man, and, looking from one to another, as if to discover how much his wife knew, grew deadly pale on seeing her tear-stained countenance.

"My darling wants you," said the father, abruptly. "She is dying, and is constantly asking for you. Yes," he added, understanding Mr. Horst's look, "your wife knows all. I have told her. I wrongfully suspected her of being the partner of your villany; but I know now, that she, too, was deceived. I beg her pardon most humbly, for thinking so badly of her, and for having spoken so harshly to her as I did; but I am sure she will forgive a father who is maddened by grief."

"Oh, do not speak of it. *I* it is who should ask to be forgiven!"

"Willma," her husband said, coming towards her.

"Do not touch me," she cried, drawing back, as if from an unclean thing, "unless you wish to madden me. Is it not enough to know that you are my husband?" and she shuddered as she pronounced that word. "Go with him," she added, fiercely, pointing towards the man, while her eyes flashed fire, and her face began to flush and pale alternately. "Go to the death-bed of the angel you have brought to an early grave. *There* is your place, not here, not here!" and, leaving the room hastily, left the two alone.

"Come!" said the unhappy father, and Mr. Horst followed.

A wagon waited in the street; they stepped in, and drove rapidly off.

They went on, on, without speaking, the sorrow-stricken father now and then brushing a big tear from his cheek, while the other sat immovable, staring straight before him, neither seeing nor hearing anything.

After a ride of two hours they reached the village. The wagon halted, and they stepped out. While the father put the things by, Mr. Horst stood, still half unconscious, looking at the familiar and once so dear objects all around him. The seven or eight months that had passed seemed like a dream, but now the awakening had come.

There, to his right side, was the cool well, by which they used to sit, on evenings, while she, with playful mirth, tried to sprinkle his hair with the sparkling waters, laughing merrily at his pretended anger when the spray sometimes wetted his face. Farther on, winding through bushes, meadows, cornfields, past hedges and shady trees, lay the lovely little path which they so often trod together; he, her small brown hand in his, telling her of the bright future and his great love. To his left he saw the old parsonage, from whose windows he watched her flitting in and out, ever busy and careful to lighten her old mother's work, and before him the neat little house, with its narrow, low door-way, in which she used to wait his coming, springing forward to welcome him, as he drew near. And now, how all had changed!—the once light, graceful figure lay up there, thin and wasted, waiting for him too,—but how? And what and who had brought her to that? This was the hardest of all. By his weakness he had allowed the world to come between him and his love, and he who had loved, ay, and who still loved her so truly, was her murderer. He on whom she had lavished her young and pure affection had brought her there. This thought was misery indeed, and it bowed his head and made his very soul tremble with anguish.

"She is waiting for you," said a low voice, and a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder. He followed up the stairs to her room. She lay on her bed, her eyes looking expectingly

towards the door, and when he entered she stretched out her wasted arms, saying, "Carl, dear Carl, come to me!" One bound, and the two were clasped in one fond and last embrace. "I could not die," she murmured, while looking lovingly into his eyes, "without you; but now I shall be gone soon. Put your dear, dear face close to me, and let me die with your beloved eyes again looking in mine. Oh, do not avert your face, and do not think that I was ever angry with you. No, no; at first it was hard, very hard, to give you up, and to teach this rebellious heart that you were another's; but soon I saw that you were right.

"Angel, I have brought you to this!"

"Do not fret, darling; it is better so, much better, than to live on, for years perhaps, and not see you, while my heart would be longing and yearning for your dear face. Will you think sometimes of me, when I am gone?"

"Always, dear love; I always thought of you, and never put your pure face from my heart. See," — drawing forth her picture, — "here I always have worn this."

A heavenly smile lit up her features, and she murmured, faintly, "True at heart! I knew it. True at heart, and now I must be quick," — her voice growing weaker and weaker, — "those books yonder — you — know them, darling? — Keep them — for my sake — kiss me!" she whispered; "father — mother, forgive" — and a fond look directed towards him finished the sentence which the dying lips were unable to articulate.

She had gone, and the three mourners knelt around her bed, and stirred not until the setting sun threw his last rays across the still form, and reminded Mr. Horst that his home was elsewhere. One long kiss upon the cold lips, one long gaze, full of anguish, upon the cold form, and he left the room. He took the road to Moosdorf, as if by instinct, reached his home by nightfall, and hastened to the room where his wife still sat, to tell her, he knew not what. Entering the room and going towards her seat, he was motioned back by a wave of her hand, and, without turning her face towards him, she spoke in a cold, measured voice, "I have taken your place in the classes, this

morning, and gave fitting reasons for your absence to the other teachers. My father was here this afternoon. I told him that a dying friend required your presence immediately. This is all I have to say," she continued, seeing him still waiting there.

"Willma, forgive," he said, with broken voice.

"When *you* have forgiven yourself, then ask it of me, not before."

"*She* has forgiven me."

"Because, — she loved you," she was going to say, but only said, "because she was an angel."

After that evening her husband never tried to broach the subject, but treated her with such humble respect that people began to comment upon it, praising Mr. Horst's devoted love and deferential bearing towards his wife, pronouncing her a cold-hearted being, undeserving of so much affection. They knew not how little Willma, at present, thought of their comments, or how little she would have cared for them had she been acquainted with them; for a settled despair had taken possession of her heart, making her regardless of everything around her.

CHAPTER V.

WATCHED.

CLOUDS, only dimly visible at first, but increasing in size as days and weeks wore on, appeared on the domestic heaven of Edward Arnold's life; which, until now, had flowed on so smoothly and in every way so satisfactorily to both. Mrs. Marie Arnold was a good wife, as far as the phrase goes; that means, she upheld her husband's dignity in a manner altogether worthy of the training of her mother, and also, in a measure, of her aunt, now her mother-in-law. She was an honor to her husband's establishment, and he was proud of her accordingly.

Mrs. Marie Arnold could say the same of her husband ; he had conducted himself as a very sensible partner, not annoying her with many caresses or tender attentions, to shock her ideas of how a fashionable husband ought to behave, but keeping strictly to the rules of the city coterie, neither expecting too much, nor giving too little. Then his brother Augustus began to be seriously ill, and Marie thought, at times, that her husband occasionally showed signs of irritability, which left unpleasant feelings. Next, as time wore on, she was surprised by being answered in short words, bordering almost on rudeness ; all of which she overlooked with calm dignity, making no comments ; but, when his temper became worse, and sometimes outbursts of abusive language were the consequences of trifling causes, Mrs. Marie thought it time for her to interfere and to remonstrate with him. He then would apologize most humbly for any rudeness he might have committed, giving, as the reason for his changed manners, the increasing sickness of his only brother. His wife was pacified, and accepted this reason as a good one, and, for a few days, all went smoothly again. Edward's manners became nevertheless still more surprising to her. Sitting at the window, or in a remote corner of the room, he would neither speak nor take notice when spoken to. For hours, and even days, he would remain thus, without seemingly noticing anything. Marie, at last, alarmed at this strange silence, went up to him and touched his shoulder ; he looked up into her face long, and, as if trying to recollect himself, rose and quickly left the room. She spoke to her father about it. Dr. Gärtner promised to watch him, without letting him know that he did so, and came at last to the conclusion that the dangerous state of Augustus' health must have affected Edward's mind. He told his daughter so, adding that he had never given her husband credit for such deep feelings, and advising her to try to divert his thoughts as much as possible from that subject. Marie tried, but did not succeed ; he did not want to be diverted, and continued to indulge in his musings, which now assumed a still more alarming aspect. Secure in his corner or hiding-place, he would now and then draw from his pocket a

wine-flask, taking draughts after draughts from it, until, almost unable to hold himself straight, he left the room. His wife, watching him from where she sat with horror and disgust, after this secured the key to the wine-cellar, but won little by this act, for, like a maniac, he then ran about the house, until he had, by some means, got hold of another bottle of wine, which he would empty as before. These were trying days for Marie, who had to confess to herself that the time of a public scandal could not be very distant, for the servants began to whisper about the strange goings-on of their master.

One night, when Edward had taken even more wine than usual, she was frightened, after she thought him fast asleep, by his getting up, throwing a dressing-gown around him, taking a light, and leaving the room. She waited anxiously for his return. After an absence of about an hour he came back, put down the light, and went to bed. The next day at breakfast, she asked him whether he was ill last night; he looked at her astonished, and, after she had told him the reason of her question, he seemed not to know at all that he had been absent from his room. Thus he acted three or four nights in succession, until she resolved to speak to his mother about it. This lady, not unobservant of her son's unaccountable conduct of late, told her daughter that Edward very likely was a sleep-walker, advising her not to stop him for a few more nights, if he should do so again, but then to ask her father's opinion on the subject. Marie promised and waited.

Mrs. Arnold herself intended to watch her son this very night. She sent the servants to bed early, and, pleading unusual weariness, said also good-night to her children. She dressed warmer, so as not to take cold, and waited, outside of her son's door, in a corner of the passage. At eleven o'clock her vigilance got rewarded. His door opened, and Edward came out. She followed him, as he quickly passed her, and went up one flight of stairs after the other, until he opened the door of a little room at the top of the house, which he entered, luckily leaving the door a little ajar, so as to enable her to observe his proceedings.

First, he put the light on a small table, then, stooping down, he drew from underneath an old-fashioned bureau a bunch of old keys, selecting hastily the smallest of them, inserted it into the keyhole of the upper drawer, unlocked and opened it. It was empty. He searched a little while with his hand at the inside, when a kind of small trap-door fell down, and with it a bouquet of once white flowers, but now so yellow and dried up and withered that it was hard to distinguish *what* flowers they had been. Some leaves had fallen out, and the others were crooked and crumpled up, as if roughly handled. To the stems of the bouquet was tied, by a ribbon, a letter evidently never opened, for the old lady could distinctly see the unbroken seal. Edward first took the flowers, looked at them, turned them in his hand, and thrust them quickly up to the place from which they had fallen; then he held the letter, which alone was yet visible, dangling at the ribbon to which it was tied, between his fingers, and, bending closer down, as if to decipher the address (for his mother saw his lips move), gave a short laugh of satisfaction, pushed that up too, shut the door, and also the drawer again, hid the keys, and took up the light, and the watcher outside, knowing that it was time for her to retreat, had just time to reach a safe place, when he had commenced his wanderings back, and entered his bedroom as noiselessly as he had left it.

Mrs. Arnold gained her apartment safely, but with a disturbed mind. What could all this mean? She was convinced that what she had seen had connection with her son's changed conduct, and that he had done some wrong, or had been injured and wrongfully treated. What was to be done? His wife must not know of this; but with whom should she counsel? If her son had been led to do some wicked act, for which he suffered now so severely, then nobody must be made acquainted with it, but there must also a way be found to bring him to confess all, and from that, then, to derive peace and rest of mind again. But how? Thus the old lady mused all night, and when morning dawned she had come to the conclusion to go to her younger son, Augustus, and from him get advice how to act in this delicate matter.

CHAPTER VI.

DARKNESS FOREVER.

"MOTHER dear, you look weary this morning, and you also seem preoccupied?" said Augustus, taking her hand in his, and trying to turn on his pillow, so as to be able to observe her countenance more easily.

"I *am* worried and greatly puzzled. I have not slept last night for thinking how to move in a matter that disturbs my mind, and have at last thought it best to speak to you about it, thinking that *you*, perhaps, might suggest a way which would be advisable to pursue. Do you feel strong enough to follow what I have to relate, or shall I postpone it for a few hours?"

"I feel quite able to listen to anything you have to say, mother; therefore begin."

"Have you noticed something strange in Edward's conduct lately?" asked she.

"I see him seldom, but he certainly has seemed changed of late, and, I regret to say, for the worse."

"Quite right, — for the worst;" and the old lady heaved a deep sigh. "Poor Marie has had a world of trouble, which she bears with admirable fortitude. It is needless to describe to you how your brother fell, — from bad got worse, — and now has come so low as to be constantly intoxicated; he will not answer his wife's questions, and, in fact, is now unable to form a clear idea. He also avoids me, and keeps out of my way as much as possible. Last night I discovered something, which does not exactly explain, but in a manner throws light on, the matter, and may give us a clue to his recent behavior."

She then went on to describe to Augustus the scene of the previous night, omitting nothing, and, having concluded, asked what he thought of the whole? She had been so intent on what she had seen, that she did not notice how her son had gradually grown pale; how his eyes dilated, and his hands grasped wildly at the bedclothes; how, as she came nearer and nearer towards

the end, big drops of perspiration stood on his brow ; and how, when she came to where Edward handled the bouquet, and looked at the letter, his eyes shut and he fell back on his pillow, from which he had half raised himself in his excitement, while one hand was pressed to his heart as if in agony. So when, getting no answer to her question, she turned around to know the cause of his silence, she was shocked to see how frightfully her story had affected him. Rising hurriedly, she rang the bell, and despatched a messenger to her brother, Dr. Gärtner.

The physician sat with his watch in one hand, while the other felt his nephew's pulse. Gravely he listened to his sister's general explanation as to how this fainting spell had been brought on, never taking his eyes off the patient's face during the whole narrative. At last Augustus opened his eyes, and, looking his uncle long and earnestly in the face, asked in a low voice, "Shall I never get well again? I *now* wish so much to live."

"My poor boy," answered his uncle, "you must first of all keep quiet, very quiet. You are young yet, and, although very much reduced in strength, if you will *now* act up to my advice as persistently as you have hitherto acted against it, we may see you, ere long, on your legs again."

"Are you in earnest?" and his eyes shone and his cheeks flamed.

"Quietly, quietly, — this is not the way to recovery. Follow my advice, and some time hence we will speak again about this matter."

"I *will* do as you tell me, uncle, for I *must* live." So saying, he shut his eyes, swallowing the drops which his mother held to his lips, and in a short time his regular breathing showed that he slept soundly.

"What has come over him so suddenly, and what has changed him so strangely? He seemed, only a day ago, like a man tired of life ; and now his highest wish seems to be to live !"

"I am as surprised as you are, brother," answered Mrs. Arnold ; "but I can give you no reason. However, I think this reaction may do him good."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders, saying only, "Perhaps ;

we shall see in a few weeks ; but where there is life, there is hope."

Augustus slept long and undisturbed. When he awoke and had taken some medicine, he seemed much strengthened by his slumber. Seeing his mother by his side, he said, presently, "Mother, will you get those flowers for me?" The old lady, thinking that his mind was wandering, did not answer, but took his hand, gently stroking it to soothe him. Looking at her, and waiting for an answer, he repeated after a short time, but more eagerly than before, "*Will* you get the bouquet for me? I *must* have it."

"Is this the way you keep your promise to your uncle?" his mother said, reproachfully; "did you not promise him to keep quiet, perfectly quiet?"

"And so I shall, mother; but first I must see the flowers and the letter, — yes, the letter before all. After that, I shall behave in everything as my uncle wishes."

"I have been very thoughtless in telling you about the matter at all; but I had no idea that this would excite you so fearfully."

"Fear not, mother; you have, I am almost convinced, done me the greatest service in relating these circumstances to me; but you must now do more. You must get the bouquet *and* the letter for me. You must, indeed," he continued, earnestly, seeing her shake her head. "You do not know how much depends on it; my honor, perhaps my life, — my happiness! You cannot understand me now," he went on, quickly, "but I shall tell you, after I have seen them, all, — my fears, my hopes, and the reason of my request. If you do not fulfil my wish, mother," he went on, while his eyes commenced to flash, and his face to flush, and his voice to tremble with inward excitement, "I must, weak as I am, seek for them myself, *for the flowers and the letters I will have!*"

His whole aspect showed his mother that it would be better to acquiesce in his wish, for he seemed to be so greatly in earnest, that she was afraid of the consequences if she should hesitate longer; therefore, forcing him gently back, she said, soothingly, "I shall certainly do all you ask, Augustus, if you

only will be reasonable and collect yourself. You will do yourself great harm if you proceed in your wild ravings. I shall get the bouquet for you, since you deem it so necessary to your peace of mind; but what you want to do with it, and why you ask for it in such an unaccountable manner, is more than I can understand."

"You will presently, mother; but wait one moment; only in one case you have to bring it to me, and that is,—if the letter is addressed to '*Miss Willma Perclass*;' then, mother, then bring it quickly, for it is mine,—mine! and I have been cruelly wronged. Now go, hasten and bring back this assurance, for my mind is in such a state of expectation, fear, hope, and—go! go!" he almost shrieked; "I can endure this suspense no longer."

Mrs. Arnold hurriedly left the room, telling the nurse, whom she found in the adjoining room, to remain with her son until her return. While passing a window, from which one could overlook the road, she saw her elder son shutting the garden-gate and walking quickly towards the city. Sure now of not being disturbed, she climbed the stairs that admitted her into the little room. There she had no difficulty in finding the keys. Selecting the smallest one, she opened the drawer, pressed the spring, and the trap-door fell down, and with it the bouquet. Turning the letter, she saw it was addressed "To Miss Willma Perclass." A faintness came over her, her knees began to tremble, and with a terrible sensation she sank upon the nearest chair. Thus she remained for several minutes, asking herself what all this meant, how had Augustus known of this, and why he was so frightfully agitated? But her mind was too much disturbed to be able to discover anything; approaching steps were heard, and she quickly left the room, taking flowers and letter with her. Hardly had she reached her own room, when she heard a yell from above, and, soon after it, Edward himself, shouting madly, and laughing wildly, rushed past her door, downstairs, out of the house into the garden. Terrified, and anticipating the worst, his mother followed him, telling a man who was working there to go and inform her son that she

wanted to speak to him. But no sooner did the man approach Edward, than he drew a knife from his pocket, shouting to him not to come near. Mrs. Arnold herself now stepped up to him, but his eyes gleamed so wildly and his features were so fearfully distorted, that she, too, drew back in affright. Doctor Gärtner was called immediately, and pronounced him to be dangerously insane. He advised strongly to send him at once to an asylum, as he could not answer for the consequences if he was not put under strict watch. So the unfortunate young man was taken away. At times he would rave furiously, laugh and shout in high glee; at other times he would sit quiet, chuckling to himself like an idiot, rubbing his hands, and smelling at his fingers as if they were flowers. He did not recognize his wife nor his mother, who sometimes were allowed to visit him, but cast malicious looks at them, growling angrily.

CHAPTER VII.

REVELATION.

THE misfortune which had thus befallen Edward and his family was kept from Augustus, as it would have been too great a shock for him in his present condition of health. He, therefore, was ignorant of the grief and sorrow which lay upon his mother, and she had to conquer her feelings, and sit quietly and collectedly by him, not daring to unburden her troubled mind. Thus it happened that he lay comparatively peacefully on his bed, pensively playing with the flowers and the letter his mother had brought to him. Both had been silent for some time, for Augustus had related to his mother all that had happened since that first ball, and in particular *how* and *when* he had sent off the bouquet expecting such joyful results. He had dwelt on many a remark, look, or gesture his brother had

then expressed, and which *now* revealed so much to him, and had hidden so much meaning, but had, at that time, been unnoticed by him. Mother and son had come to the conclusion that either jealousy, or revenge, or perhaps both, had so darkened Edward's sense of right, as to make him forget his love to his brother, and his duty towards God. For Augustus had told his mother also the secret of his brother's proposal to Miss Perclass.

"Mother," spoke the patient at last, "we cannot stop here. Miss Perclass must have thought me, all this time, a fickle, deceitful villain, who tried to win her affections, and, having done so,—for I am sure now that she loved me,—left her, rejoicing in my conquest. Therefore, to vindicate my honor, and show her that I did not act dishonorably, we must inform her, in some measure, of the facts. This bouquet and letter must be sent or brought to her now. What do you say to this? Do you think with me?"

An assenting nod was the only answer.

"I am glad we agree, but I am too ill to go myself, and even if I were able to do so, I must not. Therefore, mother,"—and looking pleadingly in her eyes, while taking her hand caressingly,— "do you understand me? will *you* help me in this?"

The old lady did not answer, for right and wrong, duty and pride, were holding a hard battle in her heart. What! should she, Elizabetha Arnold, go to Willma Horst, daughter of him whom she had wronged? Should *she*, the proud woman of the world, have to go pleading for *her* child to *his*, and perhaps run the risk of meeting him there? Oh, no, it had not come to that! But was not her son's honor at stake? had he not been looked at hitherto as a villain, as a dishonorable man? And by whom? By *his* daughter, whom *she* in former days had wronged also! and here, by her side, was not her son pleading with her, pleading with her to do her duty? What if the struggle was hard, and the battle hot, she would and must conquer; her pride must give way to right! And so, at last, she answered again, as once before, "My son, I consent."

"Dearest mother, how happy you make me! But when?" he asked, presently. "Soon, mother, soon? You know she has thought ill of me so long!"

"This instant, my son," said she, and, ringing the bell, she gave orders to have her carriage brought round.

"Mother dear, you must take letter and flowers with you; you know best what to say, and *how* to say it, when you see her. And, mother, if she is cold and distant at first, take no offence; think only how much wronged she thinks herself; be gentle and forbearing with her; tell her that *this* ought to have reached her on the date the letter bears, but that, by some sad and terrible mistake, it was kept back and found only yesterday. Tell her that I always loved her, loved *her* only — and — that I love her still. Although she has no right to listen to this now, still you have to mention it, to clear my honor, which she must have doubted until now. Tell her that it nearly cost me my life, not seeing the flowers in her hand on that memorable May-day; but that now I wish to live, hoping that perhaps she once loved me in return, although she is lost to me for ever; still I should live gladly with the assurance that her heart once was mine. Mother, mother, tell her all this; do not forget one word, mother. Oh!" he cried, throwing himself back, "that I were able to tell her myself, — to see with my own eyes what her lips perhaps would not utter, but what her features would reveal!"

"Good-by, Augustus; the carriage is at the door. I shall remember everything and hasten back to you."

Willma was astonished when she saw a handsome equipage halt before her house, out of which stepped an old lady, entirely strange to her. Still more surprised was she when a card was handed to her, bearing the name, "Elizabetha Arnold." Strangely agitated, she received the matron, for she knew that the mother of Augustus was before her. How lovely indeed! thought the visitor, as she accepted the seat Willma had brought for her.

"I am not good in introductions," said Mrs. Arnold; "especially in a matter like that which has brought me here, Mrs. Horst; therefore I shall go into the subject at once, by giving you this;"

and, producing the withered bouquet from her silk reticule, handed it to Willma. Seeing her turn it and look at the faded flowers wonderingly, she said, "If the whole matter were not so sad and serious, I should be amused at your astonishment; as it is, I beg of you to open and read the letter, and then allow me to give the message I am the bearer of. First, let me tell you though, that this ought to have been in your hands when the flowers were fresh and lovely, as the love is still which sends it now, but that, by some fearful mistake, which perhaps you will be so kind as not to wish to have explained, it was kept back, of which the giver of this was entirely unaware until a day ago. Now, my dear Mrs. Horst, be kind enough to read the letter, and send then, if you can, *one* soothing word to the sufferer, who perhaps has to give his life for the rejected love, as he *then* thought, he still bears for you." Leaving her seat, as if to admire some flowers blooming on the window-sills, she kept a close watch over Willma's every movement.

Willma opened the missive, like one dreaming, and began reading it. At first her features showed no expression but that of wonder; but soon her lips commenced to quiver, and large tears rolled over her cheeks; her breast began to heave, and the paper trembled. At last she cried out aloud, forgetting that she was not alone, "Thank Heaven that I loved an honorable man! — Augustus, my love, it is too late — too late!" and she threw herself down on the sofa in a paroxysm of grief. She was startled from the abandonment of her sorrow by the noise of wheels on the street, and, suddenly remembering her guest, she hurriedly got up; but looking around the room she saw that she was alone. She went to the window; the carriage had driven off, and Mrs. Arnold was gone. Willma sat down again, greatly relieved at having a few hours to herself. She took the letter, reading it over and over again, rejoicing at every word of love that it contained, and at last wondering who and what could have prevented the sending it off at the right time. So great was her happiness at knowing that she had loved a worthy object, that she forgot that he was lost to her forever, and that she had hardly a right to rejoice at his love. Her heart got

softened, and she resolved to tell her husband all. She was sitting, still thinking, the flowers before her, when he entered. Lifting her head she said, softly, "Carl, I wish to speak to you, if you have no other engagement."

"Certainly," he said, eagerly, stepping forward, happiness beaming from his eyes. The tone of her voice was so different from what it usually was, and she had called him "Carl," — a thing she had not done since the day of Louise's death; therefore, he sat himself down beside her, looking expectantly into her face, asking, "Have you forgiven me?"

"I have," she said, gently. He took her hand carrying it gratefully to his lips.

"And now I want you to forgive *me*."

He looked inquiringly up, saying, doubtingly, "You have not done wrong, Willma?"

"Perhaps not," she answered, smiling mournfully; "not what the *world* would call wrong; but what my conscience tells me *now*, since my eyes are opened and since I am happier. Carl," — and the word made him tremble with inward joy, — "I have been unkind to you, unforgiving, unfeeling, at a time when sympathy would have been most precious to you. I forgot my duty, and I beg of you to forgive me."

"There is nothing for me to forgive. *You* have been wronged, and I never murmured at your coldness."

"Yes, Carl, I have been wronged, but not by *you*, — not *I*, — but by somebody else; and now listen, and you will more readily forgive me, if you hear how my heart has been wounded and how sore and heavy was my trouble."

And she told him all, and when she had finished and showed him the dead flowers and the letter, he took her in his arms, saying, "My poor wife, and have you no suspicion who it was who marred your happiness?"

"I have, and I will mention to you and to no one else. You must know that Augustus' brother also wooed me, long before Augustus had come back from his travels, but, knowing him to be a worthless coxcomb, I refused him. Now, it is very likely

that, out of revenge, he acted thus, and the rumor that he is insane confirms me in my suspicion."

"You may be right, but let us bury our troubles, Willma, and bear patiently what cannot be altered."

"We will try to do so," answered his wife, giving him her hand. "Let us never speak of it again."

"Never!" and so the two, so far apart in spirit until now, got reconciled, making good the proverb, "*Trouble gives Wisdom.*"

CHAPTER VIII.

GREAT CHANGES.

"You come soon, mother," said Augustus, looking anxiously into her face. "Have you not seen her?"

"I have, and said as much to her as I dared say to a married woman. I have also heard enough to satisfy you, and more than *she* would have confessed to me. Promise to keep quiet, and not to get excited, and I will tell you all about our interview."

"I promise, only do not keep me in suspense."

When Mrs. Arnold came to relate how Willma had called out, "Augustus, my love! too late—too late!" a peaceful smile lit up his features, and a sigh as of deep relief escaped his breast; he folded his hands as if in prayer, and lay thus for several minutes, occupied with his thoughts. Then he raised himself quickly, "And why is it too late, and whose fault is it that it is so? Where is he, who has also destroyed our happiness, and brought me to the brink of the grave? Where is he, I ask? Bring him here, face to face with me, that I may tell him of his wickedness, and make him give reckoning for his sinful deed!"

"Hush, my boy!—utter no word against your brother, unless

you wish that every syllable would burn like fire upon your conscience! Listen quietly, for you must hear now of the sorrow that has befallen us all. Your brother is no longer with us."

"Dead?" Augustus inquired in a whisper, awestruck by the solemn manner, as well as by the serious words, of his mother.

"Worse than this. Your brother is — insane."

"What an awful punishment! Poor brother! poor Edward!"

Weeks passed on, while Augustus gradually grew stronger. Following minutely all the prescriptions of his uncle, it seemed as if he had determined to live. His one wish, his only thought was, to see *her* once more, if only from far; to read in her face that she no longer despised him; after that, he would be content to leave his home to live for a year in a warmer climate. Arrangements for his removal were already made. An old trustworthy servant, who had lived in the family for years, and had carried his young master in his arms when a child, had been sent to Italy, to procure healthy and comfortable quarters for him who was to leave home at the beginning of September. Not, however, in a city did he design to take his abode, but in the country, where he could have the full benefit of the balmy, gentle breezes, and, surrounded by the beauties of nature in that sunny country, be able to pacify his troubled mind. So Friederich, who in former days had visited Italy with Augustus and understood its language, went, provided with ample means, and had already sent word that everything would be comfortably established, by the time of his master's arrival.

It was the last Sunday in August; a beautiful day, full of sunshine, inviting the admirers of nature to spend the hours amidst music, and under shady trees breathe the balmy air, loaded with the fragrance of a thousand flowers. Augustus, besides the splendor of the day, had another reason for wishing to visit the gardens on that particular day. He hoped to meet Willma, and to say or look a last farewell before his departure, which was fixed now for the next Wednesday. He had informed his mother of his purpose, and she knew of no reason why he

should not avail himself of the opportunity to enjoy his last Sunday at home thus ; provided, as she said, he would use the carriage in going there. "As you wish, mother," he answered, and the matter was settled.

With almost as much agitation as on that May-day, he entered a garden most frequented, and, passing from road to road, from one avenue to another, bowing here, greeting there, smiling towards that table at which some acquaintances were sitting, and speaking a few pleasant words to this passing friend, he was in the act of turning a corner, when a full voice arrested his step.

"Ah, Mr. Arnold, out again? This is right, and will do you good."

"Doctor Perclass, how are you? I am glad to meet you."

"I have my family here. Willma, an old friend of yours, alive again. Carl, you know Mr. Arnold?"

"I have that pleasure," said Mr. Horst, returning Mr. Arnold's salute.

"I am rejoiced," said Augustus, his voice slightly trembling, "to find you here, as it gives me an opportunity of saying farewell to you all." He looked full into Willma's eyes, which shyly returned the gaze, while the flush, which had come upon her face at his unexpected appearance, paled at the announcement of his intention to leave his home.

"Then you really are going to leave Moosdorf?" the doctor inquired.

"Yes, I shall spend a year in Italy, and start on my journey next Wednesday."

"The best thing you can do, my friend, and what you ought to have done a year ago, let me tell you."

"I know it ; and have been often advised to do so by my uncle, but was wrong enough to neglect it. Now," he added, with a meaning look at Willma, "I will do all I can to grow well again. I must say good-by. I hope, when I return, to see you all well. My mother will keep me informed of all that is going on here ; so farewell." The others bowed, while the doctor took his hand, shaking it warmly, and, with one fond look at the dear face, now overcast with sadness, Augustus withdrew.

Willma had not uttered a word during the whole interview, knowing that if she had done so her voice would have betrayed the feelings of her heart.

"He is a fine fellow," exclaimed her father, after Augustus was out of hearing. "I hope he will get well again. It would be frightful for his mother, if she should lose both sons. What a terrible shock that must have been to her pride, — the insanity of her eldest! I should like to know what caused it." Willma exchanged an intelligent look with her husband.

"I forgot to tell you, papa, that Mrs. Arnold visited me the other day."

"Indeed? I never knew that you were intimate; you went to school together, but still that signifies nothing."

"I mean old Mrs. Arnold."

"Mrs. Arnold was where?" exclaimed the old gentleman, loudly, entirely forgetting where he was.

"In our house."

"Well, well," said he, amazed.

"Is this so very extraordinary?" asked Willma, amused at her father's surprise.

"Perhaps not," replied he, recovering himself; "it depends only on *why* she came. It is strange that Mrs. Arnold, who goes almost nowhere, visited you, — do you not think so?"

"It is, papa; and the reason was a very, very sad one, as you also will say, when you hear it; but not here, — not here," she said, hastily, seeing her father prepare to listen. "It is altogether too grave a matter to be talked over here. Take your supper with us, papa, and I shall tell you all. Carl knows it too."

"Of course he does," her father said; "why should he not?"

"Why, indeed?" she murmured, looking at her husband, who laid his hand silently on hers.

"Children, you both make such serious faces, which it strikes me are not appropriate to this place; therefore I propose that we go home now and disburden our minds."

"Very well, papa, we are ready; let us go home."

CHAPTER IX.

WIDOWED.

MRS. ARNOLD had received the first letter from Italy. Augustus had arrived safely, and was highly pleased with Friederich's thoughtful and comfortable arrangements. The simple peasants were all that he could wish for, — honest, obliging, and attentive; so, on the whole, he could assure his mother, that he felt contented.

Several months had passed since the departure of Augustus. In Moosdorf the ground was covered with snow and ice, while in his southern home lovely spring weather was helping to strengthen his frame and to bring back the bloom to his cheek. Already, so said his letter, he could dispense with his carriage. He spent his mornings in exploring the neighborhood of his dwelling-place, in wandering through beautiful valleys, or climbing lofty mountains, enjoying his simple but nourishing meals, gaining strength daily, and feeling young and buoyant as of yore. Those were pleasant missives for the old lady to peruse, and with anxious heart she warned him not to overtax his strength, for fear their joy should again be turned into grief.

While this family had cause for rejoicing, trouble had entered Willma's house.

Mr. Horst had gone out one afternoon to skate on the frozen river. A number of gentlemen were present, enjoying themselves. Mr. Horst was known as a famous skater, and many eyes were following his light and graceful figure as it glided smoothly over the ice. Every one was in great glee, laughing and shouting were heard from all sides, until suddenly a piercing cry silenced all. All pointed to a large hole where the water came gurgling up, and where, just before, Mr. Horst had been standing, but now was not to be seen. Terror seized the whole company. Some went for ropes, but, when they were brought, it was too late. The ice was broken up around, and the body was found, stark and dead. A sad procession followed

it to his house, whither a few gentlemen had hurried before to prepare the bereaved wife. She stood in the hall, when the others arrived, carrying their burden. With a stony face and tearless eyes she looked upon him who had been her husband; her lips moved, as if to speak, but no sound came from them.

"Willma, go upstairs," said her father, gently; but she heeded him not. Her eyes were riveted on the face of the dead, until at last she gave one fearful cry, threw herself upon him, and murmured, piteously, "Carl! Carl!" Then her hands relaxed her hold of his, and she fell back insensible.

Several weeks after this shocking catastrophe, Augustus received a letter from his mother, containing the sad news. Mrs. Horst, the letter went on, had been dangerously ill in consequence, and only lately had been pronounced out of danger. She had returned to her father's house again after the funeral, and her sister from Rosenfeld was staying with her at present. It was said that Mrs. Horst would spend the rest of the winter in her sister's home, to be removed from the place where she had sustained such a frightful shock. This mournful news affected Augustus greatly. He felt deeply for Willma's sufferings. Carl had been her husband, and, although she had not loved with the love she would have given himself, still she had felt that affection which mutual respect always commands when living in such close relationship, not to think of the fearful manner of his removal from her side. Augustus Arnold yearned to be with her now, to ease the burden she had to carry, and to show, by his devotion, how truly he loved her. But he knew that his wishes must be in vain. He was aware that *now* he must stay away even longer than he had intended, and that a year ought to pass before he should see his home again; for to present himself to her before that time would be an insult to the dead, and he knew her well enough to be convinced that her sensitive feelings would take it as such. Therefore he resolved to remain in Italy for some time longer.

CHAPTER X.

RETURNING HOME.

AUGUSTUS was expected home. Several days previous to his return, great preparations were made for his reception. So, when he at last arrived with the evening train, the house was lit up brilliantly. His mother, and the relations who had been invited to welcome him, greeted him warmly in the hall, leading him, congratulatingly, through passages strewn with green leaves and sweet flowers, underneath arches of wreaths, woven of shining grass and velvety moss, into rooms filled with fragrant, bright-hued bouquets. Joy and happiness surrounded him everywhere, and when, after he had changed his travelling suit, and stood again amongst them in full evening costume, his mother could not feel thankful enough that he was back with them once more, strong and hale, with the flush of health upon his brow, brightly flashing eye, and an expression of peace and cheerfulness upon his features which she had not seen there for years.

Mother and son had much to tell each other the first two days after his arrival; but to *that*, nearest to his heart, he never alluded; nor did his mother deem it right to speak about Willma, without getting encouragement from him. Then he had to pay the customary round of calls upon relatives, friends, and acquaintances. Thus a week passed by. His brother Edward continued in the same state of darkness, and no hope was held out that it ever would be otherwise. This was a drop of bitterness in the cup of his general satisfaction.

Willma sat alone in her sitting-room. Her work lay untouched by her side, and a bouquet of old withered flowers rested in her lap. In her left hand was a letter, yellow with age, which she had just finished reading, judging by the tear-stained cheek and the sad look still riveted on the paper. Her thoughts were far away, and her head, supported by her right hand, was bent tenderly forward, as if to inspect more closely the flowers before

her. So it happened that she did not hear a gentle knock at her door, which stood half open, nor the soft step that drew near her. She was not aware that loving eyes rested wistfully upon her form, longing to clasp her to the heart proved so faithful for years.

"Willma," said a low, pleading voice.

Nothing showed that she had heard, although a slight tremor of joy passed over her frame.

"Willma, I have waited so long and patiently for the answer of that letter you now hold in your hand, — have suffered so cruelly these weary years, — will you not answer me *now*, darling, when I ask you again, 'Do you love me?'"

The beautiful head bent still lower; tear after tear fell upon the paper.

"Darling, do I not deserve to be rewarded? — or tell me, — tell me, — have I, after all, been mistaken? For Heaven's sake, what means this silence? Am I indeed—rejected? Can you not be my wife?"

No answer followed, but the bouquet was raised gently to her lips, and covered with kisses; sob after sob came from her breast, too full with emotion to express in words the deep, undying love that she had ever felt for him.

"Mine, — mine at last! My love, look up to me, and let me read in your eyes the 'Yes' your lips will not utter."

Lifting her head tenderly he met a gaze, so deep, so full of devotion, and long pent-up feelings, that repaid him a thousand fold for all he had suffered; while her sweet soft voice murmured: —

"I loved *you* only, darling, *always*, — and love you still!"

It was a happy couple that met Dr. Perclass, a few hours later, when he came home; looking so different, he thought, from the pair that he had congratulated a few years back, in this same room.

Different, indeed, — as different as Willma's feelings were now to what they had been on that former occasion. That time, sorrow and despair; now, joy, happiness, light, and sunshine. *Then*, the preparations for her wedding were a burden

to her, hurried on, in the hope to gain the peace of mind which her reason told her she would never get; now, every little arrangement was pleasure, for *he* was ever by her side. The wedding was to be soon, not to dispel grief or sorrow, but because then they would be never separated; they could always rejoice in each other's company, forgetting, in their mutual love, the pain and agonies of former days.

On the wedding day the bride's eyes sparkled and shone with inward joy, and on the beautiful cheek rested a glow of entire happiness. On that day Wilhelm Perclass and Elizabetha Arnold forgot, in the bliss of their children, the wrongs of past days, and a warm pressure of their hands assured each other that all was forgiven.





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